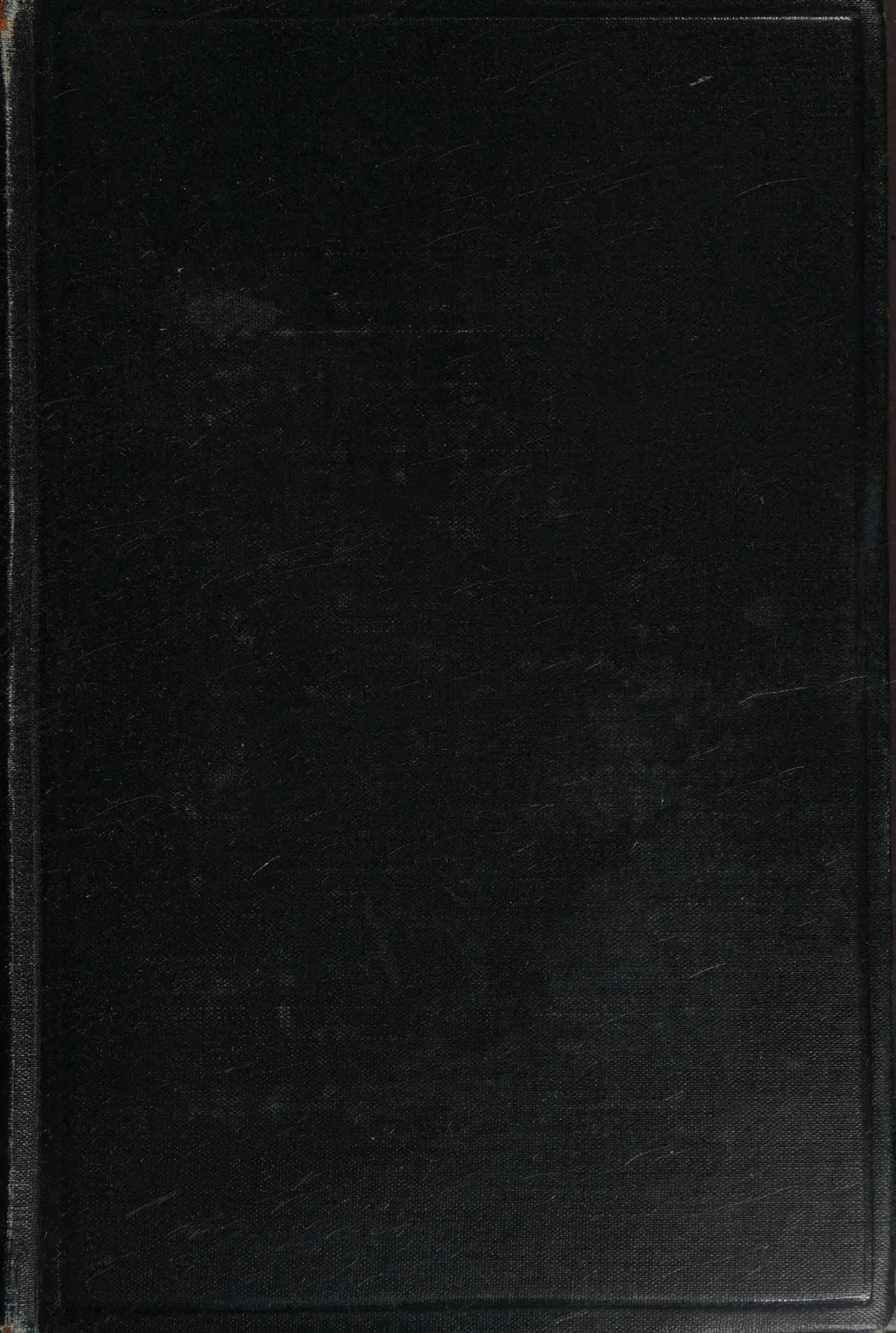




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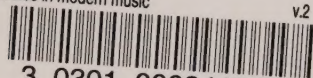
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STUDIES IN MODERN MUSIC



FREDERICK CHOPIN

STUDIES IN MODERN MUSIC

SECOND SERIES

FREDERICK CHOPIN ANTONIN DVOŘÁK
JOHANNES BRAHMS

BY

SIR W. H. HADOW, M.A.

Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

SINCE this edition was printed, the story of Chopin and George Sand has been retold by Madame Karénine (*Vie de George Sand*, vol. III.), to whose admirable work the reader is here referred. There are some points of interpretation which seem to me still disputable, there are some in which Madame Karénine's fuller knowledge has corroborated what I was obliged to state as a matter of conjecture. But there are also certain statements of fact in which I have been proud to be mistaken and which I am glad to take the opportunity of correcting. They are as follows :—

P. 124. L. 12. The date 1837 ought to be 1836.

P. 125. L. 4, *et seq.* This implies more than is true.

Some of Chopin's letters to friends have recently been discovered and are of considerable value.

P. 129. L. 4. It is now certain that Chopin did not visit Ushant until 1838.

P. 133. L. 8. Liszt's name ought to come out. He was never at Ushant after 1837.

- Pp. 137-139. This is true as far as it goes, but not the whole truth. A great part of the cause was Maurice Sand's growing irritation at Chopin's 'interference' in the family councils: but the immediate occasion was a quarrel between George Sand and Solange, in which the latter, who was wholly to blame, induced Chopin to take her part.
- Pp. 140-142. I have overstated the dissimilarity between Prince Karl and Chopin: but I am still convinced that 'Lucrezia Floriani' had no share in bringing about the rupture.
- P. 145. The story, currently accepted, that George Sand came to the door of Chopin's room, and was refused admittance, is entirely untrue. She was not in Paris at the time, but at Ushant, from whence she had written to ask for news of his health but had received no answer.

NOTE

THE following works have been consulted for the present volume:—

Dr Parry—‘The Art of Music.’

Sir George Grove—‘Dictionary of Music and Musicians,’ particularly Mr Fuller-Maitland’s article on Dvořák.

‘Life of Chopin,’ by Liszt.

‘Life and Letters of Chopin,’ by Moritz Karasowski.

‘Life of Chopin,’ by Professor Niecks.

‘Chopin,’ by Charles Willeby.

‘Chopin and other Essays,’ by Henry T. Finck.

‘Les trois Romans de Chopin,’ by Count Wodzinski.

‘Musical Studies,’ by Dr Hueffer.

George Sand—‘Histoire de ma vie.’

George Sand—‘Correspondance.’

George Sand—‘Un Hiver à Majorque.’

George Sand—‘Lucrezia Floriani.’

George Sand—‘Elle et Lui.’

P. de Musset—‘Lui et Elle.’

‘George Sand,’ by E. Caro.

‘George Sand,’ by Bertha Thomas.

‘George Sand,’ by Matthew Arnold.¹

Sainte Beuve—‘Portraits Contemporains.’

¹ Originally published in the *Fortnightly Review* for June 1877,
Reprinted in ‘Mixed Essays.’

Delacroix—'Lettres.'

Heine—'Lutetia.'

Henry James—'French Poets and Novelists.'

E. Zola—'Documents Littéraires.'

'Journal des Goncourt.'

Une Contemporaine,' by M. Brault.

'Antonin Dvořák,' by Dr Zubaty.

'Antonin Dvořák,' by H. E. Krehbiel. (Century, Sept. 1892.)

'Antonin Dvořák,' by J. J. Kral. (Music ; Chicago ; Oct. 1893.)

'Antonin Dvořák,' by Dr Stecker. (New Bohemian Encyclopædia.)

E. Chvala—'Ein Vierteljahrhundert Böhmischer Musik.'

'Johannes Brahms,' by Dr Deiters.

'Johannes Brahms,' by Bernhard Vogel.

'Johannes Brahms in seinen Werken,' by E. Krause.

J. A. Fuller-Maitland—'Masters of German Music.'

Dr Spitta—'Zur Musik.'

Dr Ehrlich—'Dreissig Jahre Künstlerleben.'

Max Kalbeck—'Johannes Brahms,' vol. i.

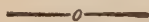
Florence May—'The Life of Johannes Brahms.'

The writer wishes to express his most cordial thanks to Mr E. W. Hennell, for permission to use the two portraits of Chopin ; to Herr E. Mandyczewski, Librarian of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde at Vienna, for assistance in the study of newspaper records and other documents ; to Messrs Mourek Naprstek, and Zubaty, for aid and advice in the Libraries at Prague ; and to M. Subert, Director of the Czech National Theatre, for permission to consult, in its Library, the scores of Dvořák's Operas.

OUTLINES OF MUSICAL FORM

Non leve quiddam interest inter humanæ mentis idola et divinæ mentis ideas; hoc est, inter placita quædam inania et veras signaturas atque impressiones factas in creaturis, prout inveniuntur.—BACON.

Outlines of Musical Form



I

FACULTIES OF APPRECIATION

IT is only natural that a systematic induction should present itself somewhat late in the history of Science. At first, when the world is new, the process of exploration must necessarily be hazardous and tentative: the discoverer must walk with uncertain steps, and must find his way by the sole aid of his own personal qualities. Hence his method is a part of himself, and can no more be communicated than keenness of sight, or delicacy of touch, or rapidity of instinct; he reaches his conclusions with only a half-consciousness of the road by which they have been attained, and imparts his results more as separate individual dogmas than as interdependent parts of an ordered and coherent scheme. His followers, dazzled by the brilliance of his intellect, and unprovided with any test for distinguishing between

facts and fancies, accept everything that he has said, and carry on the work, not by any presumptuous attempt to map out the ground that he has already covered, but by deducing further application of his laws and further development of his principles. It may be that the route which he suggested was purely conjectural; they follow it loyally in the full confidence that it will bring them to the goal. It may be that some assertion was a mere hypothesis—a rough and ready explanation which its propounder never lived to correct; none the less, they take it as axiomatic, and force the facts into compliance by some subtle and ingenious interpretation of its terms. The master's word is paramount, and if he and Nature disagree, it is so much the worse for Nature.

For a time, no doubt, there is a real value in this attitude of subservience—this unquestioning acknowledgment of the prescriptive rights of genius. In science, as in political history, it is good that the earlier steps should be autocratic, and that men should not claim a share in the constitution until they have in some measure qualified themselves for its exercise. When the state is small, a posture of constant criticism is dangerous; when the populace is ignorant, it will pass no very reasonable judgments upon the code. But as the area widens, and the mental activity increases, it becomes more and more impossible to accept as law the untested utterances of an absolute monarch: subjects begin to feel their power and to arrogate their due position; they wish to understand the system which they obey, and, it may be, to revise such of its injunctions as have grown outworn or obsolete, until at last they find

their champion, and some *Novum Organum* appears as the constituted representative of the popular voice. And so the story passes into its third and final stage; the judge himself is tried before a jury of the people at large, his enactments are criticised point by point, and his administration remodelled upon a charter of liberty to which all succeeding kings are amenable.

It is hardly necessary to say that such criticism, if it is to be of any avail, must be moderate in tone and reverent in spirit. The inductive method does not 'equalise all intellects'; there will still be contrasts of hill and valley in the levels of the human mind; there will still be peaks of genius standing, remote and solitary, above the snow line. But it is equally certain that criticism is idle unless it be entirely honest and fearless. When it is uncertain, it should confess its uncertainty without reserve; when it is opposed by some consensus of great names, it should be prepared to acknowledge itself in the wrong, and should keep an open mind for conviction; but in no case should it insult with an unthinking assent any scientific law of which it understands neither the principles nor the application. Of course, not all men have time or inclination or capacity for all topics; some things must necessarily be left on one side in the press and hurry of life; but if we are interested in a subject, we are bound to take some measure of the responsibility which that interest entails. It is a poor occupation to look upon the conflicts of thought with an aimless *dilettante* wonder, and bear no hand, even in our own field, to maintain the cause with which we profess ourselves in sympathy.

There have been some attempts to bar this rule with an exception. Science, we are told, is concrete, systematic, rational; a proper field for the exercise of analytic judgment and critical examination; but in art, as in Religion, there is a mystery into which it is impious to penetrate. The great doctrines of the Church should be exempt from criticism, because it is not given to man to comprehend them; the principles of art should be accepted in silence by a public which knows nothing of the inspiration from which they come. This dogma is probably the most dangerous half-truth that has ever helped to retard the progress of mankind. It is, of course, beyond all question that behind art, as behind Religion, there lies the unfathomable mystery of life: that, in estimating both, there is a point at which reason ends and faith begins; but it is equally sure that, before that point is reached, there is a wide and fruitful field for critical activity. Science itself has its mystery—its limit of explanation; yet no one regards Darwin as a traitor to biology, or Newton as a profane violator of the mathematics. It was no unchristian authority who bade us 'give a reason for the faith that is in us'; it is no inartistic teacher who tells us that the springs of true appreciation must flow from ourselves. And more: it is because Religion has been regarded as only a mystery that it has so often withered into a dead superstition: it is because art has been so regarded that generation after generation has stultified itself by false judgment. Grant that the production of a work of art demands certain qualities which are beyond the reach of analysis, it still remains true that the work itself

can be fairly criticised if only we will find our standpoint. Prometheus may have stolen his fire from Heaven, yet, before we accept it at his hands, we should know something of its attributes, and form some measure of its value. Above all, we should have some means of distinguishing the true spark kindled at a divine flame, from the wandering marshlights that gleam and flicker with the phosphorescence of corruption.

It is not from the great artists that one hears this plea for the mystery of their calling. Homer, Dante, Shakespear wrote to be understood, they did not wrap up their meaning in recondite phrase and elaborate symbolism. Raphael sent his drawings to Dürer, not to exhibit their intricacy of conception, but 'to shew their handiwork.' Beethoven, on his deathbed, can trust the popular verdict, and know that his new quartett 'will please some day.' And it is idle to say that these men undervalued the religion in which they held the priesthood. Only they knew that its Theology was on broad, simple lines, that its gospel consisted of truths which could find a ready echo in the heart of the world ; that its temple was one in which the humblest worshipper could find his appointed place. It is the sciolist, the *dilettante*, the half-educated amateur, who professes this Gnosticism of art, and replaces the teaching of the Church by some mystic subtleties of *Æons* and *Pleroma*.

We of the general public are in a great measure responsible for the existence of this heresy. The seed has no doubt been sown by the arrogance of the minor artist, but it has found a fostering soil in our own cowardice and our own indolence. We may set

on one side those men who are altogether outside the influence of any given art, men who have no feeling at all for music or for painting or for literature: they, at any rate, maintain the honest doubt in which lives more faith than in half the creeds, and, whatever their position, they lie wholly outside the limit of our present purpose. It is the rest of us that are really to blame, we who profess to care for painting or music, and yet lack the courage to express our own likes and dislikes, who wait timidly for some authoritative opinion, that we may gain the credit of agreeing with it, if it is right, and, if it is wrong, may divert from ourselves the responsibility of the error. No doubt this attitude has found some degree of excuse. Artists, like other enthusiasts, are apt to

Rush on a benighted man,
And give him two black eyes for being blind ;

nor does anyone like to be called blockhead, even by the representative of an opposing party. But we may reflect that free judgment is our best remedy against the intolerance of partisan spirit, and that, whatever be the issue, we are bound in common fairness and honesty to think for ourselves. Of all diseases to which the appreciation of art is liable, hypocrisy is the most fatal and the most insidious.

More particularly is this true of music, the whole criterion of which is, in a sense, subjective. That is to say, in music we have no external standard of comparison, such as exists in the representative arts; we must draw all our rules of guidance partly from the constitution of our own mind, and partly from the established practice of the great masters. If the two conflict, we must weigh the evidence before summing

up on the one side or on the other. It may be that a work is great, but not great for us, that it makes its appeal to some psychological feature or faculty in which we are deficient. In that case, we must rest content to be out of sympathy with it, unless, indeed, we can train ourselves to a wider and more catholic admiration. And this we are most likely to attain if we analyse the cause and material of our enjoyment, if we find out, first, what are the elements in our nature to which music attaches itself, and, second, what are the factors in musical composition to which our nature, as a whole, most readily responds. Here, then, are two questions for the inductive method to consider: the first a matter of pure psychology, the second a matter of pure æsthetics. Of course, the two questions are complementary: indeed, they may almost be regarded as two aspects of the same problem: but it will be convenient to take them separately, and to illustrate each by the other. The reader may be warned at the outset that there is not going to be any attempt at exhaustive analysis. Æsthetics, even more than ethics, are 'too complex to admit of accuracy'; and, in dealing with the conditions of beauty, we must be content to leave much to individual judgment and individual perception.

First, then, for the psychological side. We may well begin by accepting the ordinary tripartite division of human nature which has passed current ever since the time of Aristotle. Apart from the broad fact of life which is common to the whole organic world, the faculties of man may be classified under the three heads of sensation, which he undoubtedly shares with the other animals, emotion, which he shares with them in a higher and more

developed degree, and reason, which, so far as our present knowledge attests, he possesses as a sole and special prerogative. There is no need to enter here into any vexed questions of limit and demarcation. A philosophy of evolution may some day show that all human faculties spring from a common source: it has not yet done so; and whether it succeed or fail, the fact remains that in our present condition the three classes are different both in property and in function. Emotion may be partly dependent on the nervous system, but it cannot be summed up in terms of nervous energy: still less can the work of the mind be resolved into formulæ of chemical change and molecular movement. The spiritual principle in man is no more to be confounded with the brain which it employs as its instrument, than the sculptor with his mallet and chisel, or the violinist with his Stradivarius.

Further, the rational principle may itself be regarded as twofold. On the lower side there is a discursive intellect, which weighs evidence and compares the reports of the senses, which is logical, inferential, ratiocinative: on the higher side there is faculty of pure intuition, whence come our axioms, our great Religious truths, our first principles of art and science. Here again we must wait to determine whether this distinction be one of aspect or faculty, until we are certain that we know the meaning of the two terms: at present it is only necessary to note that the distinction is recognised as real by psychologists, no less diverse in aim than Aristotle and Hegel. Faith to the Theologian is the exercise of the intuitive reason on divine things. Thought to the metaphysician is the faculty behind inference with

which Being itself is correlative. But there is no need to call further testimony. It is enough to say in plain words, that if we know conclusions which we can prove, we must have some faculty of knowledge which deals with proof: if we know axiomatic laws which we cannot prove, we must have some faculty of knowledge which is independent of proof. We know that two straight lines cannot enclose a space: we know that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to one another. In these two facts of knowledge the two aspects of reason are exhibited in their simplest exercise.

Now, with this spiritual principle of intuition we have, for the present, nothing further to do. As it is the highest faculty in us, so it is the least capable of analysis; we cannot define it or describe it, or say more than that we are conscious of its existence. 'Everyone,' said Gautier, 'has his measure of inspiration,' and the words, apart from the tone of mockery in which they were uttered, are literally true. Everybody is, at some time or another, affected beyond the reach of words by some great display of beauty or majesty or heroism; and at such moments we feel a true inspiration which is none the less real for being inarticulate. So in Music, the one function of this intuitive principle is the immediate apprehension of vitality in the best work. To one it may be the first hearing of a Beethoven symphony, to another it may be the *Messiah*, to another some complete and perfect Volkslied; but whatever the object, we cease to reason or criticise, and simply acknowledge it as divine, in virtue of a divine principle in ourselves. The work is a momentary scintillation from the great glowing fire of genius, and we can love it, because

the best faculty that we possess is a spark kindled by the same light. Not that in admiring we claim equality. We are dumb poets, 'wanting the accomplishment of verse,' lacking the gift of articulation, which implies a clearer vision and a closer communion with the ideal. But to admire at all, in this true sense of enthusiasm and self-abandonment, is only possible when the highest chord of our nature is struck. Man is never lifted nearer to Heaven than when he bows himself to worship.

Such moments of inspired admiration are of rare occurrence. But it is impossible to mistake them; impossible to confuse them with the careless, unthinking enjoyment of the senses, in which so much of our musical appreciation is supposed to consist. Between the spontaneous reverence for a masterpiece, and the unintelligent pleasure in mere sound, there is as wide a difference as between the two loves of Plato's fable and Titian's picture: the one is a daughter of Urania, the other of mortal parentage and of mortal passion. In our impulse towards beauty, as in all other affections of our nature, the two extreme points lie outside the limits of the discursive reason, and it is with the intervening space that rational analysis can be most profitably occupied. In other words, there is a whole realm of artistic appreciation in which we can resolve our pleasure into its constituent factors, and discover not only what it is that we enjoy, but how our capacity for enjoyment is originated and developed. And as almost all errors of musical judgment spring from carelessness of observation, such analysis will not only possess a scientific interest, it will also supply us with some criterion for estimating the value of separate styles and dis-

tinguishing the false and ephemeral from the true and abiding. In a previous essay some attempt was made to sketch roughly and imperfectly the four great corner-stones on which this method should rest: the law of vitality, the law of labour, the law of proportion, and the law of fitness to the matter in hand. It now remains to build upon this foundation, to trace out in some degree the application of these laws, and to discover, if discovery is possible, the *axiomata media* which these wider generalisations include.

The mode, then, in which we are ordinarily influenced by Music may be roughly classified under three main types of affection. First, there is the purely physical, the effect of bodily pleasure or pain, which is produced on the nervous system by a concurrence or succession of air vibrations, and is analogous to those impressions of the palate, which are translated into taste, or those movements of the optic nerve, which are translated into colour. Secondly, there is the semi-physical, in which, for the mere corporeal excitation of the senses, we have that subtler and more sublimated form of influence which it is usual to comprise under the name of emotion. Here we may find analogy with the vague, half-conscious feeling of melancholy which we experience in reading Shelley's *Stanzas written in Dejection*, or the throb of courage and hopefulness which, without any thought of the artistic value of the poem, stirs in our heart as an answer to Browning's *Prospice*. Not, of course, that our appreciation of these two works is merely emotional; to say this would be to deny their position as products of art; but it has its emotional side, of which we are all conscious in a greater or less degree.

It is a commonplace of criticism that verse which is religious or patriotic is often estimated entirely out of relation to its artistic worth ; and that a poor poem may strike a responsive chord in our nature which leads us to give it an altogether factitious importance. And this error of judgment is due not to the spiritual part of our nature, for that takes artistic form for granted, and rises above it, but to an emotional sympathy with the tenour of the poem which blinds us for the moment to its literary imperfection. So in Music, it does not follow that because we feel ourselves stirred by a certain combination of notes, we are therefore in the presence of a real masterpiece. The passage in question may strike us because it is great, but it may equally do so because we are unintelligent ; and though in either case our attitude has its noble aspect, for all genuine admiration is good up to its limits, yet it is a matter of some moment whether we are burning our incense before a true or a false shrine. There is no small difference between being stimulated by some prophetic utterance, and finding our consolation in the sound 'of that blessed word Mesopotamia.'

Third, and most vital of the three, is the rational or logical side, through which we appraise an artistic work, not by any test of sensuous pleasure or emotional stimulus, but by some definite and intelligible scheme of æsthetic laws. To this belongs our appreciation of style, our appreciation of structure, all that we really imply in the word 'criticism.' By this we estimate everything in art, of which the estimation can be reduced to laws, everything that is not confined to a bare statement of personal likes and dislikes. In the two previous forms of affection we are merely passive, the

recipients of some mechanical or semi-mechanical impact from outside ; in this alone we aid the composer by our own judgment, and respond to his call with a sane and intelligent answer. Grant that the application of logic to art has special and serious dangers, that to its misuse we owe all the pedantry and all the intolerance by which the history of criticism has so often been defaced ; it still remains true that the method, if rightly exercised, is the one condition of any sound and scientific analysis. Grant that the highest art and the highest appreciation are both, in a sense, spontaneous, it will be found that they have not disregarded reason, but absorbed it. To touch the most purely spiritual part of man's nature is, *ipso facto*, to have removed furthest from the purely animal ; and it is no very extreme paradox to hold that, if a limit be transcended, it must first have been traversed. So the greatest masterpieces in Music will be found to contain sensuous, emotional and rational factors, and something beside, some divine element of life by which they are animated and inspired. The fourth of these we shall never be able to analyse, but we may, at least, devote a little attention to the organic chemistry of the others.

The sensation of sound is, on its material side, an affection of the auric nerve, under stimulus of regular and periodic air vibrations. The physical pleasure which results from it is entirely dependent on the degree of stimulation, and is therefore conditioned by two variables—the manner of vibration in the air waves, and the particular receptivity of the nerve. It will be convenient, for the sake of clearness, to take these two separately.

The simplest air vibrations may differ from each

other in three ways. By their rapidity is determined the pitch of the sound, that is, its distinction of high and low ; by their size, the volume of the sound, that is, its distinction of loud and soft ; and by their shape, the *timbre* of the sound, that is, the peculiar quality which distinguishes the 'voices' of the different musical instruments. It does not appear that the pleasurable-ness of the result is seriously affected by the first two of these, provided that they fall within the limits of clear sensation. No doubt there are at the extreme ends of the gamut notes which we cannot detect without some difficulty, but between them the differences of pitch are recognised by everyone as plain facts, which have little or nothing to do with the agreeableness of the tone. Again, when we are standing near the organ, on which some follower of Master Hugues is 'blaring out the Mode Pales-trina,' our ear may be overcharged with sound, but in that case we can no more be said to hear the music than the eye can be said to see when it is dazzled with a sudden splendour of light. Differences of *timbre*, on the contrary, do seem to imply distinctions of pleasurable-ness or the reverse. Almost all people of imperfect musical cultivation have their favourite instruments ; one enjoys the violin, but cares nothing for the piano ; another remains in frozen indifference until he is melted by the human voice ; another finds all music comprised in the invigorating skirl of the bagpipes. It must be remembered that such influences are wholly physical. They have nothing to do with artistic appreciation in the proper sense of the term ; they are as purely sensuous as our delight in the colour of a flower or the taste of a dish.

Now, the immediate effect of music upon the nervous system is incontestable. It has often been noticed in animals other than man; it is a matter of common observation in children; it has been made the basis of a proposal to use the art as a medicinal agency.¹ And as no two sets of nerves are exactly alike, it follows that in no two organisms will the same effect be produced. If the temperament be highly strung, and if there be no intellectual enjoyment of the art to divert attention, the nerve may be over-stimulated, and the result will be a feeling of pain. As the nerve strengthens, it will grow more tolerant; as education advances, the mind will be occupied with new interests. Questions of form and style will assert their pre-eminence over questions of tone. In a word, body will

Get its sop and hold its noise,
And leave soul free a little.

Théophile Gautier honestly defined music as 'le plus désagréable de tous les sons.' Charles Lamb rushed from the opera-house to solace his sufferings amid the rattle of the cab wheels. And equally the child Chopin cried with pain at the first sound of the pianoforte, and the child Mozart fainted under the intolerable blare of the trumpet. In all these cases the explanation is the same—a nerve too delicate to endure the stimulus, and an absence of any counter-acting influence that could inhibit the sensation.

It is thus wholly erroneous to suppose that there is a gulf fixed between the man who 'has no ear' and the trained musician: on the contrary, the two ex-

¹ See an interesting essay in Dr Frank's *Satyra Medica*. See also Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, II. ii. 6, 3.

tremes shade into each other by a thousand varieties of gradation. And this is particularly true of these complex impressions which result from several notes combined in harmony. The stimulus which we receive from a chord is, for obvious reasons, more vehement and acute than that which we receive from any of its constituent notes taken separately; and hence it is in our appreciation of harmonies, more than in any other form of musical effect, that the sensuous side of the art becomes apparent. Now, there is not a single chord in common use at the present day which has not been at some time condemned as a dissonance. The major third was once held to be a discord; so, later, was the dominant seventh; so, within living memory, was the so-called dominant thirteenth. Fifty years ago Chopin's harmony was 'unendurable;' thirty years ago the world accepted Chopin, but shrank in terror from Wagner and Brahms; now, we accept all three, but shake our heads over Goldmark. And the inference to which all this points is, that the terms 'concord' and 'discord' are wholly relative to the ear of the listener. The distinction between them is not to be explained on any mathematical basis, or by any *a priori* law of acoustics; it is altogether a question of psychology.

At the same time, it may be held, fairly enough, that a composer is bound to write in a manner intelligible to his generation. Volapuk may be the language of the future, but a poet who, at the present day, should publish his epic in that tongue, has only himself to thank if he find no readers. True, but the composer, like the poet, is himself a part of his generation, and, if he write simply and naturally, may be trusted not to pass out of touch with con-

temporary thought. He is a leader, but it is no part of a leader's business to lose sight of his army. And in Music, it is not the sensuous question which matters, but the intellectual ; not the fact of concord or discord, but the way in which they are employed. We still find Monteverde harsh and the Prince of Venosa crude, not because they use sharp dissonances and extreme modulations, but because they fail to justify them on any artistic grounds. They are in this matter children playing with edged tools. So, at the present day, a composer who should end a piece on a minor second would be deliberately violating the established language of the time ; and would be reprehensible, not because a minor second is ugly—for it will be a concord some day—but because, in the existing state of Music, it could not be naturally placed at the close of a cadence. Imagine Handel's face on being shown a song which finished on a dominant seventh out of the key. And, having imagined it, turn to Schumann's *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*.

Again, supposing that a generation has mainly agreed to find the climax of sensuous pleasure in certain chords—the augmented sixth, the diminished seventh and the like—it by no means follows that a composition is delightful because it contains those particular effects. Everything depends on their relation to their context, or the standpoint from which they are introduced, on the general style of the passage in which they appear. Any amateur purveyor of hymn tunes and waltzes can learn to write them ; the difficulty is to present them fitly and properly, and to place them, as points of colour, where they will harmonise with the complete scheme of the

work. Even more recondite effects, like the wonderful 'voca me cum benedictis' in Dvořák's *Requiem*, are *quâ* sensuous of secondary value. Their true importance lies in their intellectual side, in their function of exhibiting new key relationships or new methods of resolution. And if a chord does not fulfil some such duty, if it does not justify itself by bearing some definite organic part in the total plan, then it is not art but confectionery. Hearers, whose only delight in music arises from the perception of 'sweet' harmonies, are on a par with the schoolboy in Leech's picture, who suggests that the claret would be improved by a little sugar.

From this two conclusions would seem to follow. First, that Music can never be adequately criticised on sensuous grounds, partly because the receptivity of the nerve differs in different temperaments, partly because even where there is an agreement the sensuous side is wholly subordinate to the intellectual. Secondly, as a corollary from this, any musician who deliberately aims at sensuous effects alone, *ipso facto*, commits artistic suicide. He can be beaten on his own ground by the great masters, and he leaves untouched the whole of that field to the occupation of which they owe their greatness. Finally, it may be added, that sense notoriously grows tired, while mental activity endures. We very soon weary of the average drawing-room ballad, even if it gave us some animal pleasure at the first hearing: but we return again and again to the fugue of Bach or the sonata of Beethoven, because there we find the permanent expression of mind and intelligence. And thus the musical critic may virtually disregard the element of sensation, or at most may allude to it only so far as

to show that it is, in Aristotle's phrase, 'obedient to reason.'

Music affects our emotional nature in two ways: partly through the nervous system, partly through the ordinary law of association. It is a commonplace of psychology that our emotions are largely conditioned by physical states in the body,¹ and to this rule music assuredly offers no exception. Under certain circumstances, a current of energy, after passing from the ear to the brain, is transmuted into the nervous movements which constitute the material cause of the simple feelings, and thus we are roused or exhilarated or depressed by means as mechanical as those of any agency in external nature. Here, again, as in sensation itself, much depends upon the receptivity of the nerve. One hearer may be thrown into agitation by an impulse which leaves another comparatively cold, a strong temperament may be vehemently excited by conditions under which a weaker organism is stunned or paralysed. But all who are in any degree susceptible of the influence of music, have experienced some measure of this emotional stimulus, poured into the brain through sensation, and then sublimated in a physical alembic. Among the most conspicuous existing causes may be noted the rapid tremolo of the strings, as in the death song at the end of *Tristan*, the beat of a recurring figure, as in the 'Ride to the Abyss' of Berlioz' *Faust*, the reiteration of high notes on the violin, as in much of Dvořák's chamber music, and the restlessness of frequent modulation or uncertain tonality. Any reader who is at the pains to analyse the effect produced upon him by these

¹ On this point, see Professor James' *Principles of Psychology*, chap. xxv.

means of musical expression, will probably agree that they rouse first a particular kind of stimulus in the sense, and then, without any conscious intervention on his own part, a corresponding state of emotional feeling.

Far more important is the influence of association. There is no reason *in rerum naturâ* why the minor mode should be sad, but our first ancestors noticed that a cry sank in tone as the power of its utterance failed, and hence established a connection between depression of note and waning strength. So began an association of ideas to which, by transmission and inheritance, the pathos of our minor keys is mainly due. Again, the bass naturally suggests gravity and earnestness, because that is the case with the speaking voice. 'No man of real dignity,' says Aristotle, 'could ever be shrill of speech ;' and similarly, when we look for serious or dignified music, we expect to find some prominence given to its lower register. Much, too, of this association is due to the motions of our ordinary life: the force that strikes like a blow in the first phrase of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the agitation so often expressed by rapid and irregular movement; the broken voices at the end of the Funeral March in the *Eroica*; and others of similar kind. Of course music cannot define any specific emotional state: it is far too vague and indeterminate to be regarded as an articulate language; but it undoubtedly can suggest and adumbrate general types of emotion, either by producing their sensuous conditions, or by presenting some form of phrase which we can connect by association with our own experience.

But it is not in this emotional influence that the truest laws of musical criticism are to be sought. Its

criterion is nobler than that of sense, partly because it deals with an aspect of our nature which is less animal, partly because it implies a greater degree of skill in the artist ; but it is too personal and intimate to afford a satisfactory basis for discussion, and taken by itself, it offers little or no opportunity for the exercise of the higher faculties. In the *Journal des Goncourt*, there is a well-known passage describing the effect of music on a roomful of highly-strung and unintelligent listeners. The picture is not a little degrading to our humanity : nervous emotion trembling on the verge of hysteria, sentiment that has passed out of rational control, an intoxication of feeling morbid in itself and dangerous in its inevitable reaction. The case may be extreme, the account may be rhetorically exaggerated, but it contains a salutary truth. If we look on music merely as a stimulus to our emotional nature, we are really disregarding all that makes it of permanent value as an art. We are lowering it to the level of sentimental romance or bloodthirsty melodrama. Grant that this form of indulgence is less gross than the direct gratification of the senses, it is not a whit more critical. While we are under its spell, we are as incapable of sane judgment as Rinaldo in Armida's garden ; we have abrogated our manhood, we have drugged our reason, we are lying passive and inert at the mercy of an external will.

It is hardly necessary to point out that this state of mere recipience is altogether different from artistic appreciation. Art is not more a riot of the passions than it is a debauch of the senses : it contains, no doubt, sensuous and emotional elements, the importance of which there is no need to undervalue, but it is only

artistic if it subordinate them to the paramount claims of reason. Even the purest and noblest emotions do not constitute a sufficient response. We are only in a position to criticise when we have passed through the emotional stage and emerged into the intellectual region beyond. To judge a composition simply from the manner in which it works upon our feelings, is no better than judging a picture or a poem merely from our sympathy with its subject.

To this conclusion two possible objections may be urged: first, that it takes an 'ascetic' view of art; second, that it places the criterion in a mere subservience to abstract and mechanical laws. Both of these rest on a misunderstanding of the position. True art is neither ascetic nor intemperate: it implies a full command of the sensuous and emotional factors in beauty, but it knows how to employ them. Its object is to make the whole work beautiful, not to elaborate this or that aspect at the expense of the rest; and such an object can only be achieved in virtue of certain intellectual principles. Beethoven's harmony is not less exquisite, or his passion less true and vital because he regards the requirements of style and structure as paramount. On the contrary, the sensuous and emotional beauties of his work are themselves enhanced by the unerring skill with which he places his effects and contrasts his colours. Again, whatever their intellectual laws may be they are not mechanical. They afford no excuse for *kapellmeistermusik*, no justification for cold accuracy and dull correctness: so far from precluding genius, they presuppose it. They are not grammatical conventions which can be learned from text-books, they are the direct and spontaneous outcome of the human reason. Thus,

in order to ascertain them, we must begin by discovering what is the broadest principle of formal beauty which can be deduced from the laws of mind, and use it as a provisional hypothesis with which to approach our problem. We shall then see how far this principle finds actual embodiment in the works of the great composers, and if there are exceptions or divergences, how far they can be explained. If our original hypothesis is confirmed by experience, we may reasonably conclude that it is true; if not, we must recognise that we are on the wrong line, and we must retrace our steps. In musical criticism, as in every other form of scientific investigation, it is not the function of man to anticipate facts, but to interpret them.

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II

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

'IT may be shown,' says Mr Herbert Spencer,¹ 'that Music is but an idealisation of the natural language of emotion, and that, consequently, Music must be good or bad according as it conforms to the laws of this natural language. The various inflections of voice which accompany feelings of different kinds and intensities, are the germs out of which Music is developed. It is demonstrable that these inflections and cadences are not accidental or arbitrary: but that they are determined by certain general principles of vital action; and that their expressiveness depends on this. Whence it follows that musical phrases, and the melodies built on them, can be effective only when they are in harmony with these general principles. It is difficult here properly to illustrate this position. But perhaps it will suffice to instance the swarms of worthless ballads that infest drawing-rooms, as compositions which science would forbid. They sin against science by setting to music ideas that are not emotional enough to prompt musical expression: and they also sin against science by using musical phrases that have no relation to the ideas expressed, even when these are emotional. They are bad because they are un-

¹ *On Education*, pp. 41-42.

true. And to say they are untrue is to say they are unscientific.'

In these words we may find a starting-point for sound criticism. If a musical composition is to make any bid for the rank of classic it must, as a primary essential, be genuine in feeling: by which we mean, that it must not only be original, though originality is implied and included, but that, in Wordsworth's fine phrase, it must be inevitable. To recognise a melody as perfect is to feel, when we come to know it, that it could not possibly have been written in any other way: that its phraseology, whether simple or complex, whether obvious or recondite, is the necessary outgrowth of the thought which it embodies. Of course this law does not preclude the element of surprise, which is one legitimate factor of musical effect. The hearer, like the composer, may sometimes be 'stung with the splendour of a sudden thought' and roused into a moment of exquisite consciousness by an unexpected cadence or a new modulation. But if the surprise be more than temporary, it is inartistic. Before we reach the conclusion of the work, we must be convinced that the effect in question bears some vital and organic part in the total structure: that it is, in short, a prediction which is justified by a future fulfilment. And, in that case, we end by acknowledging that it was not an isolated and deliberate attempt to stir our wonder, but part of an established plan which only astonished us at the moment because we were unable to foresee its issue.

It is obvious that in the drama or the novel we are but little impressed by devices which we can detect as artificial. A writer who lets us see that he 'wants to make our flesh creep,' has forearmed us

already against all his terrors : a playwright who tells us at the outset that he is going to persecute his heroine, simply fills us with an idle curiosity as to the precise form which the persecution will take. There can be no illusion where there is no appearance of spontaneity : no art when there is no concealment of artifice. Victor Hugo can move us intensely; Scribe cannot move us at all : for the former, with all his vehemence and exaggeration, is speaking out of the abundance of the heart, and the latter is merely using the stage as a chess-board for the elaboration of ingenious problems. So it is in Music. Meyerbeer is one of the 'cleverest' of musicians : brilliant, ready, resourceful, courageous enough to rob the grave of its horror and the Church of its majesty, if only he may rouse his audience to a higher strain of attention. Yet we are no more stirred by Meyerbeer than we are by Monk Lewis. The music is drowned by the soliloquies of the composer, who looks on from his box and wonders whether this scene is sufficiently terrible, whether that situation contains the requisite amount of pathos ; and whether the effects, which have been so carefully calculated and so precisely measured, have after all proved to be a profitable investment.

But there are lower depths than this. It is not long since an eminent composer of sentimental ballads was obliging enough to communicate to the magazines a complete recipe of his method. It is hardly worth while to give the details, but attention may be called to the singularly naïve confession with which the disclosure ended :—that for a song to be truly successful 'its melody must always remind the audience of something that they have heard before.' Surely there has never been so complete an instance of artistic false-

hood gibbeted by its own perpetrator. Poe, no doubt may be quoted as a parallel, but not with justice. The famous essay on the Raven is clearly an after-thought: a critical puzzle designed to mystify a credulous public. One might as well believe that Burger's *Lenore* was written by rule and measure, or that Berlioz planned his *Marche au Supplice* with a diagram of the procession at his side.

Such examples of artistic failure are not always ignoble. It is quite possible that a man may be pre-occupied with some scientific aspect of his art, that he may write not from the overmastering desire to express some beautiful thought, but from a deliberate wish to solve some difficult problem or transcend some technical limit. In such a case he will produce work which, though not valuable as an artistic achievement, is yet interesting as a study. He may show us some new method of resolving a discord, some new cadence for the conclusion of a phrase, some new shape which the melodic curve can legitimately assume: and thus, though he devote himself to a side issue, though his work will be purely formal and academic, he may yet claim an honourable place, not indeed among the poets of Music, but among its verse-writers. Of this type we have a conspicuous instance in Sir George Macfarren. He is essentially a musical grammarian, engaged all his life long in settling the doctrine of the enclitic *de*, wide of knowledge, sincere of purpose, and almost entirely devoid of spontaneity. Consequently there is not, in all his composition, a single page which is without interest to the student of harmony, and there is hardly one which can put forward any claim to rank as a living product of art. And this is not because

he has regarded the intellectual aspect of Music as paramount,—for to do this is a necessary condition of good work,—but because he has emphasised the wrong intellectual aspect, because he has confused grammar with style. The great masters—Bach, Beethoven, Brahms—are every whit as correct as Macfarren, and every whit as ingenious, but to them correctness and ingenuity are subordinate, almost incidental: to him they appear to be the main object and aim of composition.

Secondly, the feeling must not only be inevitable, it must be worth expressing. ‘The maiden,’ says Ruskin, ‘may sing her lost love, but the miser may not sing his lost money-bags.’ Now it is obvious that worth is a relative term. We do not want gravity in a ballroom or solemnity in a comic opera. There is plenty of space in Music for lightness, and delicacy, and simplicity and humour, provided that they recognise their proper limits and are devoted to their proper themes. But there is no room for forms of expression which are silly or superficial or vulgar. We are not really moved by the sorrows of a little tin soldier, or the flirtations of a man and a maid under an umbrella. We do not really weep over the chorister boy who becomes an angel, or the carol singer (with organ obbligato) who dies in a snow-drift through half-a-dozen stanzas of imperfect verse. It is with very alien jaws that we laugh at the tedious horse-play and cheap catch-words of our ‘humorous’ songs. It is with very little fascination that we watch the posturing of our hoydenish polkas or our ill-bred slangy waltzes. And our aversion is not due to any pedantic insistence on the dignity of the art. Music has a perfect right, *desipere in loco*,

but it ought to choose its place with opportunity, and regulate its folly by some laws of good behaviour.

The limit for music, in short, is much the same as the limit for poetry. There is probably no generic type of emotion which the poet would dismiss as unworthy of treatment, but under each genus there are certain specific forms which he would naturally leave untouched as perversions, or degradations. Every normal and healthy instinct may have its artistic expression, no matter how slight or transitory its nature; it is the parodies, the simulations, the abnormal counterparts that afford no material to poet or musician. Schumann's nursery tunes are as delightful as the 'Child's Garden of Verses'; Mr Austin Dobson has not more skill in porcelain than Rameau or Scarlatti or Couperin. If we want romance, there is Chopin; if dance music, there is Strauss; if simple sentiment, there are the best of Mendelssohn's *Lieder*. Above all, if we must sing something which our audience can follow without thought and at a single hearing, let us discard our second-rate librettists and second-hand composers, and let us turn back to the national songs which have sprung from the very heart of our people. We shall not thereby aid in conferring royalties on writers who had far better be following some other profession: but we shall at least help to purify the atmosphere of contemporary art. There is no more melancholy spectacle of human infirmity than a so-called 'Ballad Concert' of the present day: unless it be the amateur reproductions, where all the faults of a bad system are faithfully copied, and the unconscious burlesque of feeling is itself unconsciously burlesqued.

All music, then, which is worthy of serious regard must be the spontaneous outcome of a natural and healthy emotion. But this is clearly not the last word in the matter: if it were, we should be threatened with the *reductio ad absurdum*, that all genuine music is of equal value. Nor can the distinction be entirely explained by the fact that some emotional states are deeper and more serious than others: for, in the first place, such a classification of our feelings is almost impossible; and, in the second, even if it were effected, it would carry us but a little way towards a solution. The emotional basis of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony is lighter than that of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*, but Beethoven's is undoubtedly the greater work. We have, in short, the whole question of formal beauty to discuss, the whole analysis of those intellectual laws on which it has been already suggested that artistic perfection ultimately depends. It must be remembered that music is not only the expression, but the idealisation of feeling, and that its true worth will be largely conditioned by the qualities of abstract beauty which such an idealisation implies.

These qualities may roughly be classified under the two heads of style and structure. By structure in music is meant the general distribution of ideas in a work or movement: the contrast and recurrence of themes, the organisation of the key system, the whole architectural plan which aims at the establishment of coherence and stability. By style is meant the due arrangement of the phraseology; the right melodic curve, the proper degree of richness and transparency in the harmonisation, the feeling for the special capacities of the different voices or instruments. No doubt the two cannot be sharply separ-

ated: they are in a great measure interdependent, and are more or less determined by the same ultimate principles. But as complementary aspects they may at any rate be logically distinguished, and in some cases may even suggest different lines of criticism. In some early sonata movements, for instance, the structure is coherent, but the phraseology deficient in force and contrast. In some works of our romantic period the phraseology is admirable, but the importance of key-relationship almost entirely disregarded. It is much the same with a play or a novel; the story cannot be perfectly told unless the characters are perfectly drawn; we may even add, unless the author has entire command of the right word and the telling phrase. But short of this ideal proportion the balance may swing to the side of plot or to the side of characterisation, to boldness of invention or delicacy of treatment. It is only in the greatest work that the form is, on both sides, entirely satisfying.

Now, the highest type of formal perfection which our minds are capable of conceiving, is that of unity in diversity. The discovery of this principle in Nature, as a whole, was the main problem of Greek philosophy; its discovery in different departments of Nature is the entire problem of modern science. Knowledge is the unification of isolated facts under a single law: truth, which is the correlative of knowledge, finds its climax in the existence of law and the inter-relation of facts. More especially is this the case with that particular form of unification which we call organic; that in which the details are absolutely diverse in character, but all play interdependent parts in one single economy. The organism

is not only our supreme example of physical structure, it is the type of all human society and all natural order.

Again, our great evolutionist philosopher has told us that an organism must possess three main attributes. First, it must be definite, clear in outline, complete in substance, and filling with unbroken continuity the fixed limits by which it is circumscribed. Secondly, it must be heterogeneous: composed, that is, of a plurality of parts, each of which has its own special function, and no two of which are interchangeable. Thirdly, it must be coherent: holding this plurality in exact balance and equipoise, so that each part, incapable by itself of maintaining the whole body, is yet essential to the due health and efficiency of the others. Illustrations of this principle are the primary facts of biology. They may be traced in steady gradation from the earliest and most rudimentary forms of animal life until they culminate in the ordered complexity of the human frame. And a line of similar development runs through all political history, from the primitive tribe to the communities of our present civilisation.

Mutatis mutandis, this scientific ideal is also the ideal of art. When we speak of a great picture, a great poem, a great novel, we mean one that groups its diverse elements round a central principle, one in which variety is never chaotic and unity never monotonous; one in which every stroke tells and every touch is essential. No doubt, in the representative arts, this principle is qualified by other considerations,—poetry has to criticise life, painting has to represent nature; but in both the element of formal perfection is of vital importance,

and in both formal perfection means perfection of organism. A bad composition in pictorial art means one in which some detail can be obliterated without loss to the whole. A bad composition in literature means one which contains superfluous digressions and 'passages that lead to nothing.' Virgil is the great epic artist, Sophocles the great artist in drama, for precisely the same reasons that teach us to see extravagance in Wiertz' scenes from the *Iliad*, or make us laugh, not without pity, at Nat Lee's *Bedlam Tragedy* 'in Twenty-five Acts and some Odd Scenes.' Again the flexibility of fine verse simply means the organic inter-relation of different metrical devices. If we examine a dozen lines of Shakespear, or Milton, or Keats, or Tennyson, we shall recognise that their beauty of sound depends partly on the harmonious juxtaposition of words, each of which finds its natural complement in the rest, partly on the varieties of stress which balance and compensate one another throughout the whole. Take away the variety, and we get verse like that of Hoole's *Tasso*. Take away the compensation, and we get the misshapen prose of Byron's *Deformed Transformed*.

Lastly, among all arts, it is to Music that the law of organic proportion most intimately applies. In Painting and Literature, an emotional state gives rise to a thought which gives rise to an appropriate form of expression: in Music, the state of emotion gives rise to a melody which is thought and form in one. While, therefore, with the representative arts, we can sometimes criticise the idea and the expression as two separate factors, with Music it is only in the expression that the idea can be ascertained. Again, the musician has a far more opulent

command of formal resource than his brother artists. Contrasts of *timbre* and tone are at least as various as contrasts of colour: the complexity of musical rhythm is far beyond anything that language can achieve; while, in the devices of harmony, and still more of polyphony and counterpoint, the composer occupies a position which is virtually unique in human experience. Hence we may naturally expect that, in their highest development, the style and structure of Music should present the most complete examples of artistic organism: that they should be, as Mr Pater has described them, the perfect type to which it is the glory of other arts to conform.

Before we proceed to test this hypothesis by reference to the practice of the great masters, there is one preliminary consideration on which it is advisable to lay some emphasis. Music assumes so many forms, and is devoted to so many purposes, that it would be idle to expect the same kind of organic perfection in all. The melodies of the dance and the ballad are, for obvious reasons, compelled to a certain uniformity of rhythm and stanza; and it is impossible that they should exhibit the same diversity as a work which is not bound by their restrictions. Again, a continuously recurrent figure may be used with admirable effect in a short pianoforte piece, or in the accompaniment of a song, though it would grow monotonous and wearisome if maintained through the whole length of a symphonic movement. In Music as in Poetry, the heterogeneity of a work will be in great measure conditioned by its extent and scale; only, as no composition is large enough to justify incoherence, so none is small enough to dispense

EXAMPLES

A

B

C

D

E

with diversity altogether. Look at Heine's *Du bist wie eine Blume* simply as a matter of phrase and versification. The unity of the lyric is beyond all question, but we may note how the extra syllables come pressing into the more impassioned stanza, and how the style of the whole is perfected by the exquisite inversion in the last line.

It is precisely the same with a lyric tune like 'Barbara Allen.'¹ Here the stanza is prescribed by the exigencies of the ballad-form, in which the alternate strains answer each other perforce. But it is worth remarking, that although there is little variety in the rhythmic figure, there is almost perfect organisation in the notes that constitute the melodic curve. It is not too much to say that after the first phrase every detail in the tune is inevitable, made requisite either by some preceding gap which the ear desires to fill, or by some swing of metre which the mind desires to balance. Another and more highly organised instance may be found in the great tune from the finale of the Ninth Symphony.² Here the curve is as broad and simple as that of a Volkslied, filling its limit with entire and satisfying completeness, while the rhythm is perhaps the most marvellous example in Music of organic effect produced from the plainest and most elementary materials. In the first part only two rhythmic figures are employed, one of which is a bare statement of the tempo, while the other differs from it only by a dotted note, yet they are so presented that there is no sense of monotony in the stanza. The first two strains of the second part present a new set of figures, of which each is developed out of its predecessor, while the

¹ See Example A.

² See Example B.

last two complete the unity of the tune as a whole, by recalling the first stanza and recapitulating its close. Still more, in cases where there is no external requisition of metre, shall we find the unity of the melodic organism qualified by the diversity of its parts. In the first movement of Mozart's G Minor Quintett, there is an admirable instance;¹ the first two bars balance in rhythm, but differ in curve and harmony; the third intervenes with a new figure in strong contrast; and the fourth closes the half-stanza by recalling the second. Then comes the most beautiful point of style in the whole tune. The figure of the third bar, which, hitherto, has only been used for contrast (like the third line of the Omar Khayyam stanza in verse), is answered and compensated by the fifth bar, which itself leads directly into the cadence-phrase. And thus every part is made vital, and differences themselves co-ordinated into uniformity of result. Finally, as a climax, we may take two more examples from Beethoven: the melody on which is founded the slow movement of the Pathétique,² and the opening theme of the Violoncello Sonata in A.³ The former contains six different rhythmic figures in eight bars, the latter is composed of disparate elements, no two of which bear any resemblance to each other; and yet both alike are complete melodic stanzas, as definite and coherent in their total effect as any dance-tune of Strauss, or any ballad-tune of Schumann. It is impossible for the organisation of melody to be carried to a higher pitch. Unity may be easily enough attained by an exact balance of similar phrases, but only a master can produce it from the interplay of factors so diverse and so incongruous.

¹ See Example C.² See Example D.³ See Example E

The earliest known method of harmonising a melody was a continuous series of consecutive intervals, produced when the same passage is sung simultaneously by two voices of different pitch. Here we have the first protoplasmic germ of this particular musical device, absolutely homogeneous in style, and therefore inartistic. Art in harmony began with organisation; that is, with the discovery that unity of effect might be combined with individuality in the part writing: that each voice might have a separate character, each chord be determined by some intelligible law of sequence, and yet the whole be developed into a coherent system. So rose the old counterpoint of Lassus and Palestrina, bound by certain conventional restrictions, but, within their limits, as highly organised as genius could make it: so in course of time grew the freer polyphony of Bach and Brahms and Wagner, which stands to the earlier method as the Romance languages to Latin. Thus there are two main tests of good harmony,—first, whether each part taken by itself is interesting; second, whether each chord can be explained and justified by its context. For instance, the setting of the words ‘Und seinem Heil’gen Geist’ from the chorale in the *Lobgesang* is badly harmonised; the last chord is simply out of balance, and it is only necessary to open any page of Bach to see the contrast. Of course, in song and drama, and, to a certain extent, even in sonata and symphony, it may be necessary to break the law of organism in some particular detail in order to obtain a special poetic effect. But in that case the passage in question must be regarded as a factor in the total result: the principle of criticism is not altered, but only applied to a wider area,

And, at any rate, on all occasions where drama is out of place, and purity of tone the first requisite, the rule of organisation in harmony may be taken as paramount. There is no need to multiply instances ; two lie ready to hand in our collection of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The second tune assigned in that volume to the ' Litany of the Incarnate Word ' is a compendium of almost every fault of style which harmony can commit : the setting of ' Nun danket alle Gott ' is as near perfection as it is possible for our system to attain.

So far we have considered musical style in relation to isolated strains or melodies : and thus have led up to the more important question of its nature in the range of a continuous composition. It is obviously easier to write a good sentence than a good paragraph or chapter, even though all three are amenable to the same laws : and we can find many an artist who, like Horace's coppersmith, has skill enough in details, but remains

Infelix operis summâ, quia ponere totum
Nescit.

Indeed, the preservation of balance and unity in a large work is an achievement that requires high gifts cultivated by long and patient training : every cadence gives a hostage to fortune, every phrase offers a pledge that must ultimately be redeemed. It is not surprising that composers have often been too fully preoccupied with the elaboration of single points to notice the due inter-relation of parts by which style in the whole is constituted.

For instance, there can be no question of Grieg's genius. His lyric pieces for the pianoforte are almost uniformly charming : his songs are among the greatest

possessions of the art. But as soon as Grieg attempts to fill a larger canvas, his imperfections of style begin to appear, and the work becomes either incoherent, as in the String Quartett, or monotonous, as in the first two numbers of the incidental music to *Peer Gynt*. Gounod, again, has some admirable qualities, but among them is not included any great gift for uniformity, beyond the limits of a Berceuse or a Serenade. The 'Calf of Gold' song in *Faust* opens with a magnificent phrase, and then degenerates into an anticlimax of pure irrelevance. The choruses in the *Redemption* and the *Mors et Vita* set out, for the most part, with a pompous fugue exposition, and discard counterpoint at the moment when its difficulties begin. Grant that the change of manner is due to deliberate choice and not to deficiency in technical skill; no plea of purpose can palliate the error. It would be just as reasonable for a dramatist to write the first act of his tragedy in Elizabethan English and drop to the nineteenth century for the other four.

We shall find a more interesting example if we compare the two versions of Brahms' B major Trio. In the first, possibly misled by an apparent analogy from Beethoven,¹ Brahms allowed himself to spoil the opening movement with an incident of sheer incongruity: in the second he has completely rewritten the passage and reduced it to entire harmony with its surroundings. Not that the latter version is deficient in contrast, but it makes contrast subservient to coherence. And it is certainly a striking fact that the great master should have recalled his early work in order to correct the one offence against organism of style, which it may be held to contain.

¹ Finale of the A major Sonata, Op. 101.

But we need look no further than Beethoven if we wish to see this principle in its most perfect embodiment. The opening movements of the two Sonatas which he has numbered as Op. 27, stand on the outside verge of organic style: the former contains the maximum of diversity without being indefinite; the latter the maximum of unity without being monotonous: and between their bounds lie all those marvellous examples of contrast and antithesis, of variation and development, of firm outline and steadfast plan, which have placed his work as far beyond rivalry as that of Angelo or Shakespear. See how the stormy opening of the *Waldstein* is soothed and quieted by the melody of the second subject: how the bleak majesty of the first theme in the *Appassionata* finds its complement in the warm, rich tune that enters upon the change of key. Look at the balance of phrase in the first Rasoumoffsky Quartett, in the fifth Symphony, in the *Emperor* Concerto. But indeed the fact is too patent to need illustration, even if the selection of instances were possible. One might as well try to pick out examples of Milton's dignity and Goethe's wisdom, or direct attention to evidences of skill in Titian and Velasquez. Even the few imperfections may readily be condoned. The finale of the first Sonata is a legacy from an alien system: that of the *Eroica* an obvious experiment, that of the Sonata in A major an instance of the curious devotion to counterpoint which Beethoven specially manifested at the end of his career. And it should be noted that his comparative failures are always steps in a new direction, and are almost always followed by some conspicuous victory on the same lines. In any case, they may be counted on

the fingers of a single hand. There is certainly no musician, there is probably no artist, whose work as a whole is so varied and yet so masterly.

A complete discussion of musical structure would involve a history of the art from the year 1600. It must therefore suffice for the present purpose to note the main stages of development, and to analyse the chief types, first as they appear in single movements, then as they are combined into the complex organisms of sonata and symphony. Before the Florentine revolution there was virtually no such thing as a system of key-relationship, no recognition of the important effects of contrast which may be produced in a work by the alternation of different tonics. Music during the Ecclesiastical period was entirely homogeneous in structure, bound within the limits of the mode, or, at most, transcending them for a moment of tentative audacity wholly different from the firm definite scheme of modern modulation. When the change came, it was only natural that the first consequence should be a period of chaos. The lay-brothers who had broken loose from the monastery went roaming about the world with no settled plan or direction, turning along any path which promised adventure, and ending their journey wherever they happened to stop at nightfall. The Moresca in Monteverde's *Orfeo*¹ is a good example of the reaction against uniformity. It can hardly be described without anachronism in our modern terminology, but, if the attempt must be made, we may analyse it as a single melodic phrase, beginning on dominant harmony and ending on tonic, repeated four times in four different keys.

¹ Quoted in Grove's *Dictionary*, Vol. ii. p. 501.

In other words, it is as deficient in structural coherence as the preceding method in structural diversity.

But as our scale came into established use, and brought with it an intelligible system of related tonic notes, the value of key distribution began *pari passu* to be recognised. Men refused any longer to acquiesce in mere indefiniteness or mere monotony, and set themselves to find some means of organising the form of composition by combining different tonal centres into a coherent system. Scientific composers, loyal to the traditions of counterpoint, endeavoured to solve their problem by the elaboration of the fugue in which unity of style is secured by the recurrent subject, and diversity of structure by the free modulation. This form, which may be said to start with the Gabriellis, and to culminate in Sebastian Bach, is of the highest interest to musicians as an attempt to make style and structure play into each other's hands: the former possessing too little diversity, the latter too little coherence to stand as separate organisms. But as it is factitious in its origin, so it is liable to become rigid and mechanical in its results; an exercise of barren ingenuity, not a warm vital expression of true emotion. Bach no doubt could breathe poetry into it, as Corneille could fill with his splendid rhetoric the hard outlines of the classical drama, but both results are great in spite of their form, not in consequence of it. Considered merely as examples of fugue structure, Bach's compositions are not greater than those of a hundred kapellmeisters of his time: they owe their greatness to the purity of their themes, and to the unapproachable perfection of their harmony. But lay aside all questions of melody and harmony, everything, in short, which can be

classed under the head of style, and Beethoven's sonatas will still remain supreme in virtue of their structure. Fugue form is an artificial thing which a man can learn : sonata form is a living thing which a man must feel.

Hence it is interesting to notice that all the forms most intimately associated with the sonata may be directly traced to one primitive type of Volkslied.¹ The simplest possible contrast of key which man can adopt without falling into incoherence, is that of a melody in three strains : the first asserting the tonic, the second leading to some related key, the third repeating the tonic in order to complete the outline. Now, if we imagine the first strain given in duplicate, so as to suit the requirements of a four-line stanza of verse, we shall find ourselves with a melodic form of which 'The Bluebells of Scotland' and 'The Vicar of Bray' may be taken as familiar examples. It is probable that the immediate reiteration of the first phrase is a concession to the poet rather than a point of musical structure : in any case, the essential element of the form is to be found in the three clauses, assertion, contrast, and reassertion. 'Of this simple type,' says Dr Parry, 'there are literally thousands of examples.' It is, indeed, the most natural form of melodic sentence which the popular songs of any nation can assume : it is the living germ from which all our most complex musical organisms are developed.

At the outset there are two possible lines of

¹ The term sonata is here employed in the sense which it has borne since the time of Haydn. If it is widened so as to include composers of the 17th and early 18th century, we must start from two primitive types in place of one.

evolution. First, the clause of contrast and the clause of reassertion may be repeated alternately so as to extend the number of strains to five or seven, or whatever is required by the exigencies of the words. Thus we get the primitive type of rondo, which may be illustrated by Burns' 'John Hielandman,' or by the Skye Boat Song, or by our well-known hymn for Palm Sunday. A further stage of development is reached when the number of clauses is fixed at five: and when the fourth, instead of being an exact repetition of the second, affords a change of contrast by presenting a new episode in a new key. This gives us the rondo form as used by Rameau and Purcell, Haydn and Mozart, and occasionally Beethoven himself. We need only compare the exquisite song, 'I attempt from Love's sickness to fly,' with the Adagio of the Sonata Pathétique to see that in point of structure they are identical. No doubt there were some experiments on the way. Haydn tried the form as a vehicle of variations; Mozart opened a new path in his Piano Sonata in A minor: but all these were only variants of the established type which either left its structure unaltered, or remained as exceptions. It was not until the time of Beethoven that the rondo passed into its third stage of development, and even with him the earlier form is of not infrequent occurrence.¹

¹ The development may be illustrated if we take alphabetical letters to represent the clauses. The primitive ballad form is A B A: each verse being a unit, and therefore the whole song inorganic. The primitive rondo form is A B A B A B A, etc., the whole song being a unit, and therefore slightly organised. The form of Purcell's song is A B A C A, and therefore the most highly organised of the three.

Secondly, the number of clauses may be restricted to the original three, and each strain by itself organised into a higher degree of diversity. In its simplest form, which may be exemplified by the minuets of many early sonatas, the first strain ends with a full close in the tonic, and thus, while it fulfils the function of asserting its key, does so at the expense of complete detachment from the second. Hence it is a step towards organisation if the first strain is made to end with a half close, or even to modulate to the key from which the second is going to start. If this is so, the cadence of the third clause will have to be modified—since the tune must end with a full close in the key in which it began—and thus a new element of diversity is introduced into the work as a whole. Of this stage an instance may be found in the Minuet of Haydn's Piano Sonata in D (No. 6), where the first strain is divided into two sub-clauses, one in the tonic, the other in the dominant, and the third strain transposes the latter back and presents both of them in the same key. Here another point offers itself for consideration. If the clause of assertion has been allowed to modulate, and still more, if it has been allowed to dwell upon a key other than the tonic of the piece, it is obvious that the clause of contrast must be allowed still freer modulation—otherwise its purpose will remain unaccomplished. And by this time our clauses have grown in size and extent until it is not appropriate to call them clauses any longer. They have become sentences, or even paragraphs, each with its own subdivisions, its own structural character, and its own function in the general economy of the whole movement. For instance, in the Minuet of

Mozart's Piano Sonata in A major, the first part consists of a 10-bar tune in A followed by an 8-bar tune in E: the second begins in B minor, drops to A minor, and then passes through an augmented sixth to the dominant of A, while the third brings the work to a logical conclusion by repeating the two sections of the first in the tonic key.¹

In its present stage of development the form is admirably suited to the short lyric movements in which it usually appears. Taken by itself it typifies the classical minuet, the air for variations, and the majority of such pianoforte pieces as the *Kinderscenen* and the *Poetische Tonbilder*. Extended by the addition of a second example, and completed by a re-statement of the first, it gives us the minuet and trio of our sonatas and the common structure of the march and the polonaise. But, as the form grows in bulk and importance, as it discovers new functions and adapts itself to a new environment, so it will naturally submit to certain changes of organism. The two sections of which the first part is composed, appear at present in a direct juxtaposition which will seem crude and disconnected if the movement be increased to a larger size: and it will therefore be advisable to join them by a link of modulation that shall carry

¹ The analysis of the Mozart Minuet may be tabulated as follows:—

FIRST PART.	SECOND PART.	THIRD PART.
(a) Melody in A major.	(a) New episode in B minor.	(a) Repetition of first melody in A major.
(b) Melody in E major.	(b) The same repeated in A minor.	(b) Repetition of second melody in A major.
	(c) New cadence-phrase to dominant of A.	

the ear gradually over the change of key. Again, the sections of contrast in the second part have hitherto fulfilled their purpose by a complete digression, not only presenting new keys but using them to exhibit new material; and it is obvious that, after the limit of a few bars, such a digression will be fatal to the unity of the work as a whole. Now the variety of key in this part is, as we have already seen, a structural necessity: and thus the readiest means of unification will be attained if we minimise the novelty of material, and use the sections of contrast, either wholly or mainly, to express phrases and themes that have been already stated in the first part of the composition. Lastly, we may notice that the third part ends by repeating in the tonic precisely the same melodic cadence which the first part ended by asserting in the dominant; and it will sometimes happen, that the clause which served admirably as the finish of a paragraph may appear abrupt or inconclusive as the finish of a chapter. In such cases the composer can extend his third part by the addition of an epilogue or coda, completing and rounding off the outline, which would otherwise be left imperfect. It must be remembered that, as a point of structure, the existence of the coda is optional. The composer may wish, for certain reasons of style, to make the first part of his work conclusive, or the last inconclusive: and in either event the need of an epilogue disappears. But, as a general rule, it may be said that the more highly organised the movement the more it will require the employment of this particular device. Continuity is best secured if all the parts of the work be made interdependent, and in that case it is only by a coda

that any real climax of phraseology can be attained.

One more detail and the organism is complete. Among the many experiments in structure which mark the course of musical evolution, one of the most important is the so-called French Overture. The main feature of this form, which may be readily illustrated by the Overture to the *Messiah*, was its habit of prefacing the chief division with an introduction or prologue in slower tempo; and this device has been adopted by the great cyclic composers, and especially by Beethoven, in order to prepare the hearer for movements of unusual importance or solemnity. Like the coda, the introduction is optional in its use: depending not on the structure of the work, but on the manner of its thought and the style of its expression. In Beethoven we find three principal types: the first merely calling attention to the key of the piece, either by directly asserting it, as in the Piano Sonata in F sharp major, or by rousing expectation, as in the third Rasoumoffsky Quartett, the second containing in addition some melodic phrase which is to be employed in the succeeding movement, as in the Sonata Pathétique or the Piano Trio in E flat; and the third, as in the A major Symphony, foreshadowing the key-system, not only of the opening allegro, but of the whole work. It is hardly fantastic to compare the respective prologues of *Henry VIII.*, of *Pericles*, and of *Romeo and Juliet*.

This, then, is the highest type of structural development to which Music has yet arrived. The three clauses of the primitive ballad-tune have grown into three cantos, all different in character

and function, all working together in the maintenance of a single economy. The first, technically known as the Exposition, presents two subjects or paragraphs, diverse in key, and connected by a short episodic link of modulation: the second, technically known as the Development Section, consists of a fantasia on themes or phrases of the first, with such freedom of key as the composer chooses to adopt: the third, technically known as the Recapitulation, repeats the two subjects with any minimum of change that may be implied in the transposition of the second to the tonic key. Finally, if the style of the movement require it, the whole may be introduced by a Prologue and summed up by an Epilogue.¹ It is hardly necessary to point out that the principle of perfect symmetry embodied in this form is precisely the same as that

¹ As a simple instance of the form, we may take the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in G major, Op. 14, No. 3:—

<i>Prologue or Introduction.</i>	<i>First Canto or Exposition.</i>	<i>Second Canto or Development Section.</i>	<i>Third Canto or Recapitulation.</i>	<i>Epilogue or Coda.</i>
None	(a) First Subject in G major (bars 1-8). (b) Transition modulating to D major (bars 9-25). (c) Second Subject, consisting of four sections, in D major (bars 26-63).	(a) Treatment of First Subject, G minor to B flat major (bars 64-73). (b) Treatment of Second Subject in B flat major (bars 74-80). (c) Treatment of First Subject in A flat, G minor, F minor and E flat (bars 81-106). (d) New Episode on dominant pedal of G, and anticipation of First Subject (bars 107-123).	(a) First Subject in G major (bars 124-131). (b) Transition extended so as to lead back to G major (bars 132-151). (c) Second Subject in G major (bars 152-186).	Final reminiscence of First Subject (bars 187-199).

on which is constructed a great drama or a great novel. At the outset our attention is divided between two main centres of interest; as the work proceeds the plan is complicated by the introduction of new centres; at its close the complications are cleared away and the interests identified. For instance, the *Alcestis* of Euripides opens with the bare contrast of life and death, continues with those of youth and age, of mourning and hospitality, of vacillating weakness and genial strength, and finally returns to its two first themes, and unifies them by restoring its heroine from the grave. But the parallel is hardly a matter for further illustration. The exact balance and proportion of the structure will best be exhibited if we epitomise its three parts under their appropriate abstract names:—duality for the first, plurality for the second, unity for the third.

Omitting a few rare exceptions, such as the Finale of the Hammerclavier Sonata, we may say that all movements in so-called Classical form represent some definite stage in this line of evolution. No doubt experiments were tried by Schumann and Chopin and other composers of the Romantic School, but even these are not so much new discoveries as variants of the established type, sometimes due to carelessness or indifference, and sometimes to deliberate plan. It must be remembered that the generation which succeeded Beethoven paid much less attention to structure than to expression. The essays of Berlioz and Schumann, admirable in most respects, are almost entirely silent on the subject of musical form, and their work, considered from this standpoint, is not an advance but a retreat. Schumann, of course, was far the greater of the

two; yet even with him we feel that deliberation has not always brought counsel. The introduction to his A minor Quartett, and still more the first movement of his C major Symphony, are really steps away from organism, condoned in part by undeniable beauties of style, but at the same time needing condonation as structural errors. Even in the shorter narrative forms of ballade and impromptu, of fantasia and novellette, the same rule holds good. Their structure will be found satisfactory in proportion as it is organic, it will be found organic in proportion as it conforms to this law of natural development.

There remains a word to be said about the combination of different numbers or movements into a continuous work. The complete sonata-form, like the Trilogies or Tetralogies of the classical drama, is a complex organism of which each part is itself organic, a corporate body composed of separate but interdependent members. Hence we should naturally expect that in the earliest examples there would be a comparative homogeneity of melodic style and key system, and that this homogeneity would be gradually differentiated as the form advanced towards perfection. This is precisely what has happened. In the first pianoforte sonata of Haydn all the movements are in the same key, as they were in the suites and partitas of a previous age; then, by steps which are readily traceable, the form progressed and developed until it reached its structural climax in Brahms. So also with the style of the work as a whole, by which is meant the selection of different organic types in its constituent members. Out of all possible alternatives — the minuet, the

rondo, the air with variations, the fully-developed 'ternary' form—it is clearly the composer's business to choose specimens which will afford the most complete contrast and yet combine into the most organic unity. The gradual application of this rule is simply another name for the growth of the sonata form. One has only to compare Haydn's first quartett with one of the Rasoumoffskys to see the advance; one has only to compare the *Eroica* Symphony with Chopin's B-flat minor Sonata to see the retrogression. In this, as in other respects, Brahms has restored the balance and has adapted the traditions of Beethoven to the language of the present day.

Enough has been said to show that this principle of organic growth not only explains the style and structure of all great Music, but answers to a fundamental need in human nature. Its laws are not mere grammatical rules, framed in one generation to be broken in the next; it makes no transitory appeal to faculties that change with every mood and every condition: if there be anything permanent and abiding in the mind of man, it is here that it will find its counterpart. Not, of course, that the present stage of development is to be regarded as final: there is probably no such thing as finality in any art. But progress is not change, it is a kind of change, and one which, from its very nature, points to a fixed ideal. We, with our limited capacities of knowledge, and our limited appreciation of beauty, may still be far behind the position that is to be occupied in future ages. But, unless the teaching of History be wholly false, we may predict with some security the direction in which that position will lie. It is as inconceivable

in art as it is in physical nature, that the process of organic evolution should revert or turn aside. No doubt there will be further modification of detail—some ‘Shakspearian convention’ abandoned, some scheme of artistic composition revised; but every step that brings greater freedom will bring greater responsibility, and will shift the issue from artificial laws to the great code of human intelligence. We cannot suppose that the generations which look back upon our own masters will ever rest satisfied with incoherence or shapelessness or monotony. There will be new methods in the days to come, but the principles of art will remain unaltered.

III

FUNCTION

A CHARACTER in one of Mr Sturgis' delightful comedies propounds a recipe for beauty, and is met by the criticism that he has omitted one important element—the beauty itself. Some such objection may perhaps be brought against the analysis of the preceding chapter. It may be said that Music cannot be appraised in terms of law and method, that scientific theories can tell us nothing about inspiration, and that without inspiration art degenerates into a soulless and mechanical exercise. No discussion of balance and design, of diversity and coherence will ever explain why we are stirred to the depths of our being by the love-duet in *Tristan*, or the slow movement in the *Fifth Symphony*, or the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*. No account of proportion in phraseology or system in key-relationship can answer the question why we find Grieg piquant, or Schumann vigorous, or Chopin graceful. In short, our *Ars Poetica* is a mere *Gradus ad Parnassum*, containing, it may be, some hints for versification, but leaving the essentials of artistic conception entirely untouched.

This objection is only of force if it confines itself to the bare truism, that inspiration is not a matter which

we can define. It breaks down if it goes on to infer that inspiration is not a matter which we can detect. For the artistic organism, which has hitherto been under consideration, necessarily requires life as its formative condition; and any attempt to produce it artificially must result either in total failure or in the mere copy of some existing scheme. Our academic composers who publish music on the ground that they have studied counterpoint, are, as a rule, only tolerable where they are imitative: as soon as they try to devise a new melody or elaborate a new cadence they are almost certain to become trivial or vulgar. Indeed, it would seem to be shown by experience that Music has no chance of surviving unless it arise spontaneously from a healthy state of emotion, and that, if it does so arise, it will naturally manifest itself, to a greater or less degree, in an organic shape. We may, therefore, fairly conclude that perfection of musical form, in its widest and deepest sense, is a mark or sign of genuineness in musical feeling, and that analysis, though it can never tell us whence inspiration comes, may at least direct us where we can look for it.

But as yet the analysis itself is incomplete. It has attempted to describe what Music is, not what Music does: in other words, it has investigated the problem of structure, but not that of function. There remains, therefore, the further question of the object for which the art exists, the place that it occupies in our æsthetic life, and the particular means of action by which its purpose is fulfilled. Some hints towards an answer have already been suggested: the sensuous pleasure communicated to the nervous system by certain air-vibrations: the emotional impulses which

can be aroused by sense or association, or both : and the intellectual satisfaction which naturally answers to the spectacle of organic balance and symmetry. It follows, then, to arrange these premises, and to carry them, as far as possible, to their logical conclusion.

Now, the general function of music may be stated in a single word—to be beautiful. It is the one art in which no human being can raise the false issue of a direct ethical influence. It allows absolutely no scope for the confusion of thought, which, on one side, brought *Madame Bovary* into the law-courts, and, on the other, has taught the British public to regard as a great religious teacher the ingenious gentleman who illustrated the *Contes Drolatiques*. Of course, all contemplation of pure beauty is ennobling, and in this sense music may have the same indirect moral bearing as a flower or a sunset or a Greek statue. But of immediate moral bearing it has none. It means nothing, it teaches nothing, it enforces no rule of life, and prescribes no system of conduct. All attempts to make it descriptive have ended in disaster : all attempts to confine it to mere emotional excitement have ended in degradation. Grant that nations and individuals of imperfect musical experience have not advanced beyond the emotional aspect : that Plato had to prohibit certain modes as intemperate, that governments have had to prohibit certain melodies as dangerous. In almost all such cases it will be found that the music in question is vocal, and that more than half the stimulus is due to its words or its topic. Considered in and by itself, the ultimate aim and purpose of the art is to present the highest attainable degree of pure beauty in sound.

For the fulfilment of this purpose, the first and most obvious requisite is an entire command over materials and method. Nothing is more ugly than palpable failure: nothing more likely to destroy confidence than an appearance of uncertainty or vacillation. In many of our so-called popular song-tunes, we can lay our finger on some place where the composer was in evident difficulty: where he inserts an awkward or irrelevant phrase, because, like an unskilful chess-player, he can only extricate himself by breaking his design. Again, in ill-written harmony, we shall often find poor or hollow chords inserted, not because the composer wanted them, but because he could find no other way of resolving their predecessors. Of course, it will sometimes happen that a great, though imperfect master will stray from his appointed domain, and wander for a moment in unfamiliar territory. The fugue in Dvorák's Requiem is conspicuously unsuccessful, but it need not affect our estimate of the '*Dies Iræ*' or the '*Recordare Jesu pie.*' We only feel it a pity that the artist who can do such magnificent work in his own style, should be forced by convention into a manner for which he has no aptitude. In structure the first movement of Chopin's Pianoforte Trio is as badly drawn as some of the later Correggios: but the error, though more fundamental than that of Dvorák, only circumscribes the master's province, without overrunning it. We remember the circumstances under which the Trio was written, and turn aside to the *Études* and the *Nocturnes*. One genuine success in art is enough to outweigh a thousand failures: but the difference between failure and success remains unimpaired.

At the same time, it is most important that we should recognise the necessary limitations to which musical expression is subject. It is idle for us to go about lamenting, like the fool in Rabelais, that 'there is no better bread than that which can be made with wheat.' Our scale is notoriously a rough approximation in which only certain types of melodic curve are possible. Our harmony is often reduced to a choice between two incompatible alternatives: the striking chord required by the context, or the smooth progression required by the parts. In such cases the test lies ready to hand. Is the material difficult? Let us see how the great masters have treated it. Are the options mutually exclusive? Let us see which of them makes for organism of structure and general effectiveness of function. We have no right to pass final criticism on any detail of a work until we have heard the whole: and even then our judgment must depend on some knowledge of precedents and parallels. The chief danger of 'a little learning' is its predisposition to intolerance.

If unskilfulness be the death of style, cleverness is among the most insidious of its diseases. Nothing in all literature is more exasperating than that 'cult of the unusual word' which arises now and again as a periodic fashion. Whether it take the form of the sham-antiquarianism which has been happily nicknamed from Wardour Street, or of an ostentatious acquaintance with the by-ways of the dictionary, or of the unsynonymous synonyms of the country journalist, it is in equal measure the sign-manual of euphuism and affectation. No doubt the unusual word may have a perfectly legitimate employment. It may carry a metaphor, it may complete a rhythm,

it may make a point of colour: and in all such instances it is justified by the purpose that it achieves. But if it is merely unusual, it had far better be left out altogether. We do not think very highly of a verse-writer who invariably says 'quaff' instead of 'drink,' because 'quaff' is poetical and 'drink' is commonplace.

The same is true of musical euphuism. A recondite chord is of absolutely no value in itself; its whole worth depends on its purpose and its context. A fresh twist in the shape of a melody is only beautiful if the preceding curve leads up to it. For instance, we appear to be passing, at the present day, through a period of feverish activity in the invention of new cadences. Now a new cadence in the hands of a master like Brahms or Parry is a delight, for, with all its novelty, we feel that it is the logical outcome of the passage from which it springs. It is only necessary to quote the close of the first stanza in the *Schicksalslied*, or of the 'Sacrificial Chorus' in *Judith*, or the brilliant practical joke of the 'Æschylus Motif' in the *Frogs*. Again, the new cadences of Grieg and Dvořák are always charming, because they are in exact harmony with the chromatic style which is natural to those two writers. But when inferior composers attempt the same thing, they only produce results which are crude and incongruous, or, at worst, make their exit on a mechanical epigram, in which the head of one platitude is appended to the tail of another. Indeed, self-consciousness is only a more subtle form of unskilfulness. The 'clever' artist is like the enchanter's servant in the old story, possessing just enough magic to raise the spirit, but not enough to keep it under control.

It now follows to consider more directly the manner in which the influence of Music is exercised. And first, we may notice that the art, as appealing primarily to the ear, necessarily involves a fixed continuity in time, and so, in a sense, is always throwing our attention forward to its issue. The conditions under which we apprehend a picture, and those under which we apprehend a melody, are entirely different; the former enables us to follow the constituent parts in any order we choose, the latter binds us to a settled and irreversible sequence. Indeed, so firmly is this law established, that we are notoriously incapable of recalling the most familiar tune backwards, and are even in some straits to recognise a fugue-subject when it appears 'cancrizans,' as it does, for instance, in the Finale of the Hammerclavier Sonata. Hence a great part of the effect of Music is prospective, and depends upon the particular way in which it rouses and satisfies an attitude of expectation.

This method may roughly be classified under three heads. First, the Music may give us precisely what we should naturally anticipate; in other words, it may suggest some coming resolution or cadence, and proceed to it at once without interruption. Everyone remembers the æsthetic damsels, in Mr Du Maurier's picture, who 'never listen to Mendelssohn, because there are no wrong notes.' They were unconsciously enunciating an important piece of scientific criticism. For Mendelssohn never disappoints, and never surprises; his style flows on as placidly as a level stream in a pastoral country, and the hearer floats down it with no effort of intelligence, with no expectation of adventure, knowing that even beyond the distant bend there will be the same overhanging

willows, and the same intervals of sunny meadow, and the same rippled reflections of an April sky. Hence, of all composers, Mendelssohn appeals most intimately to audiences that are untrained or inexperienced; and hence, also, critics, who are anxious to acquire a cheap reputation, usually begin by expressing contempt for him. The best of his lighter work is as charming as that of Miss Austen; and it is only now and then that we feel inclined to say—as Charlotte Brontë said after reading *Emma*—‘I don’t want my blood curdled, but I like it stirred.’

Secondly, the Music may directly contradict our anticipation by diverting an apparently straightforward passage into an unforeseen channel. Under this head come all effects of surprise, all sudden modulations, all unusual cadences and unexpected turns of phrase. An amusing instance is the change from A minor to D flat major in the ‘Pro Peccatis’ of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*, which is almost as irresistible as a joke from Aristophanes: a far more august and magnificent example is the great Neapolitan sixth, which, in the first movement of Beethoven’s A major Symphony, comes just before the cadence phrase in the exposition. Indeed, the device may be used for purposes of humour, as it is in Mr Aldrich’s delightful story of Marjory Daw, or for purposes of romance, as it is by Victor Hugo in ‘Le Roi s’amuse.’ The finale of Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony contains a distinct effect of comedy in the unexpected C sharp, which persistently intrudes itself among other people’s keys, until at last it worries the orchestra into accepting it. On the other hand, the slow movement of Dvořák’s F-minor Trio notably exemplifies the romantic use. No one who has ever heard it can

forget the last page: the innocent diatonic opening of the melody, and the abrupt, bewildering change which follows in its second bar. It is obvious that the sense of incongruity, which stimulates all astonishment, may, under different conditions, arouse either laughter or apprehension: and both these effects lie well within the range of musical art. They form, in fact, two of the most important emotional types which it has the power of adumbrating: not, of course, by depicting any humorous scene or suggesting any particular terror, but by administering the appropriate kind of nervous shock. Grant that if a man knows nothing at all about music, he will form no expectations, and consequently will never be either astonished or amused. It does not follow that his limitations are representative of the human race. One might as well argue that there is no fun in a French comedy, because none was detected by Mr Anstey's British audience.

Thirdly, the music may baffle anticipation by suggesting alternatives and throwing us in doubt as to the selection that it is going to make. After a little experience, we come to learn that there are certain typical shapes of melodic stanza, certain common devices of modulation, certain forms of cadence which are in ordinary use. Hence, when we listen to a new work, we frame a half-conscious forecast of probabilities, and the composer, if he has the skill, may stimulate our minds by offering two or three possible issues and defying us to determine which he means ultimately to accept. This is the highest form which the prospective effect in Music can assume, and is roughly parallel to ingenuity of plot in narrative or dramatic literature. For example, a common type of

four-line stanza in music opens with a clear-cut phrase, then repeats it a degree higher or a degree lower in the scale, then goes on to the clause of contrast, and finally returns to the original key. So when we hear the central tune in Chopin's F minor Fantasia, and find that its first two strains exactly correspond to this pattern, we feel that we know already how it is going to proceed, and settle ourselves to watch our expectations fulfilled. But Chopin knows better, and gives us a third strain which, instead of embodying the clause of contrast, consists of another repetition of the same phrase, a tone lower still. By this time we begin to wonder whether the tune is going to be entirely homogeneous in style, and whether, in the one strain that is left to complete the stanza, it can possibly get back without awkwardness to the key from which it has strayed. Both these doubts are solved in the most masterly fashion by the concluding line, which not only carries the modulation with consummate ease, but completes the organic outline of the melody with the daintiest delicacy and finish. Again, in Grieg's F major Violin Sonata, the principal theme of the middle movement seems to get into inextricable difficulties of phraseology, and we listen to it with the same apprehensive interest with which we look on at the imbroglia in *Evan Harrington*. But at precisely the right moment there appears a new cadence, which would never have occurred to anyone but Grieg, and the difficulties are cleared away as if by magic. It is hardly necessary to point out that Bach and Beethoven are equally rich in this kind of musical resourcefulness. The harmonic progressions of the one, the melodic form of the other, constantly sug-

gest a balance of alternative issues, and as constantly make the selection which the hearer finally acknowledges as the best.

The same rule holds good in the matter of key distribution. When the sonata form was young, the key of its second subject was fixed by an almost unalterable convention : if the movement was in a major mode, it was the dominant, if in a minor mode, it was the relative major. Hence the audiences of Haydn and Mozart always expected the same key system, and were hardly ever disappointed. But Beethoven, from the outset of his career, broke through this traditional arrangement, and so began by surprising his hearers, and ended by making their intelligence co-operate with his own. Take, for instance, the first movement of the Hammerclavier Sonata. The first subject is in B flat, and the transition after modulating to its dominant F, proceeds with a vehement and emphatic assertion of the new key, as though Beethoven intended to revert to the customary usage, which, it must be remembered, he often follows. But the very emphasis makes the hearer suspicious. It is not in Beethoven's manner to underline his keys with so much flourish and ostentation : perhaps, after all, appearances are deceitful, and he is only throwing us off the scent. Then our uncertainty is artfully intensified by an interpolation of the opening theme, which, at this stage of the movement, is the last thing in the world that we expect ; and immediately after it comes a modulation to G major, and a presentation of the second subject in that key. The anticipation of this event is an exercise of critical sagacity not dissimilar to that afforded by a novel of Balzac or a play of Shakespear. In the famous scene of

Madame Marneffe's confession, we are half-cheated into believing that the woman's repentance is real, though we know that its reality is rendered impossible by all laws of characterisation. When Lear decides between his three daughters, we feel that Cordelia's coldness of manner has raised a false issue which the subsequent development of the drama will correct. In short, the true function of structure, whether it be in literature or in music, is to set before us two competing impulses and bid us reflect upon them.

But it may be urged that a musical composition can only surprise or baffle on the first occasion: after that we remember what is coming, and can foretell the end as readily as the composer himself. This view pays an undeserved compliment to the capacities of human nature. The average listener does not really hear a work of any complexity the first time that it is performed in his presence: he apprehends more or less of it according to the degree of his ability or experience, but there will certainly be effects that escape his notice, and, if the composition be truly organic, those effects will be vital to the appreciation of the whole. Indeed, we have here one of the most obvious tests of a great work. We grow tired of a trivial melody or a shallow fantasia, for it tells us its whole secret at a single hearing: but we may spend our lives over Bach's Fugues or Beethoven's Symphonies without ever hoping to exhaust their limitless reserve. Again, we are not such creatures of pure logic that an effect once produced in us is incapable of repetition. We may know our Shakespear by heart, and yet be moved by the humour of Falstaff and the pathos of Imogen, by

the subtle questionings of Hamlet and the frenzied self-accusations of Othello. So in listening to great Music we often allow ourselves to be carried away by the impulse of the moment: we forget that we know what is going to happen, or expect it in a new mood and from a new standpoint. There are many avenues by which the sense of novelty can be approached, and among them not the least important is that of our own imagination. No doubt this influence would be seriously impaired if we were to hear the same passage day after day and hour after hour, but this, of course, we are never called upon to do. With the present range and variety of our musical literature, an effect that is genuinely striking may be weakened by familiarity, but can hardly be ever wholly obliterated.

It will thus be seen that the manner in which we are impressed by Music is enormously complex. First, there is the sensuous appeal, the different characteristics of *timbre* and tone, of rich harmony and full orchestration, of all those devices which are usually described in metaphors of taste and colour. Second, and inclusive of the first, is the emotional appeal, the exhilaration of rapid movement, the gravity of stately chords and broad diatonic melody, the restlessness of broken rhythm and frequent modulation, the shades of surprise which follow upon a sudden change or an unexpected crisis. Third, and inclusive of the other two, is the intellectual appeal, the exhibition of balance and symmetry in the management of these several effects, the definiteness of plan and design, the vitality and proportion of organic growth. If to these be added the two supreme requirements of originality in the composer and of fitness to the

occasion of display, we shall have at any rate a rough criterion for determining work that, in the truest sense of the term, is classic. In thus summing-up results, it is almost a presumption for any writer to suggest illustrations : but if it be permissible to point to masterpieces, in which these principles are embodied with absolute and unfaltering perfection, we may select, as typical instances, the choral numbers from Bach's B minor Mass, the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven, and Brahms' *Schicksalslied*.

Before leaving this subject, of which, indeed, only the outer courts have been trodden, there are three objections which it may be advisable to meet. The first would discard the whole analysis as a piece of *a priori* inference. As a matter of fact, it would say, the hearer does not trouble himself about these elaborate questions, he does not follow the subtleties of style or the coherence of key-system, he does not anticipate the course which a passage is going to adopt, he simply listens to the music, and enjoys it, because he finds it pleasant. It is idle to suppose that a man cannot admire Beethoven without being prepared to pass an examination in the technicalities of abstract science. This objection is wholly beside the mark. Men reasoned correctly long before Aristotle invented the syllogism, but none the less his theory of the syllogism is an analysis of correct reasoning. In like manner the unscientific hearer may be totally unconscious of the causes which underlie his enjoyment, and yet the causes themselves be both operative and capable of analysis. The laws of musical philosophy, like those of physiological science, are not artificial subtleties : they are an attempt to explain the ordinary conditions of health,

and every man who has the taste to prefer one tune to another must necessarily have made reference, however unconscious, to some principles of discrimination. Indeed this argument from ignorance has already been anticipated in a parallel form. '*Voici quarante ans que je dis de la prose,*' says M. Jourdain, '*sans que j'en susse rien.*'

The second objection is of more interest. Grant, it may be said, that our analysis enables us in some measure to explain the supreme masterpieces of Music, there will still remain a wide range of lower achievements with which it would appear wholly inadequate to deal. If a composition is weak in structure or careless in style, it has failed to satisfy our test, but we have no right to infer that it is without value. On the contrary, an imperfect work may often survive in spite of its imperfections, and may counterbalance its worst errors by some attractiveness of charm or some inherent vitality of thought. In *Jane Eyre* are faults which would have killed a novel of less genius, but the reviewers who condemned it are now only remembered as carping and illiberal pedants. Shelley may be 'ineffectual,' and Keats 'immature,' but the most adverse critic can no longer deny the beauty that they have added to English literature. And in like manner we shall find musical compositions which fall short of the highest level, which fail to attain the most satisfying completeness of organic form, and which yet deliver a message that is well worth the hearing. There is a broad expanse between the summit of Olympus, where the gods have their habitation, and the low-lying meadows and valleys of our ordinary life.

In such a case we can only judge fairly by a careful balance of merits and defects, and, above all, by a careful revision of our standpoint in relation to both. It may be that the structure which we regard as inorganic is really a new type of organism, a further development along the line which we have already traced. It may be that the style which appears careless, has really some subtle method which we are as yet too clumsy to detect. And even if we are honestly unable to convince ourselves of error, even if our certitude only grows and gathers as we study the passage afresh, it by no means follows that the fault which we have noted is a final ground for condemnation. There can be no perfection without entire control of resource, but control is notoriously difficult in proportion to the variety and novelty of the emotional expression. Hence the more complex and striking the ideas which a composer wishes to embody, the harder he will find it to present them in a supreme artistic form. In Schumann, to take the highest example at once, we sometimes seem to find a great thought struggling with an intractable medium: we feel rather than hear what it is that he wishes to express, we apprehend his meaning from broken phrases and incomplete suggestions. Compare his symphonies with those of Beethoven, and you see the baffled Titanic strength beside the serene unerring mastery of the divine hand. Yet, if it be failure, it is noble failure, better by far than the elaboration of smooth commonplaces and finished platitudes. It is not carelessness but preoccupation, not unskilfulness but audacity, not scantiness of resource but prodigality of expenditure. Schumann's music is always manly, forcible, genuine,

and it is no serious dispraise to say that in the larger forms he is a less perfect artist than he is in his lyrics.

Here, then, we may see the solution of the present problem. All music which appeals to us as true has for us a certain measure of value. It is only conceit and dishonesty, and self-conscious artifice, that merit absolute and unqualified reprobation: for the rest we may appraise our work partly in reference to its particular purpose, partly by an estimate of the success with which its object is attained. If it present any passage of real interest, we owe it a corresponding debt of gratitude: if it counterbalance a fault of one kind by a beauty of another, then criticism should determine which of the two has the more important bearing on the case. But there can be no sound judgment without a code, and no code in music without a recognition and acknowledgment of its masterpieces. Thus the analysis of perfect art does not preclude us from the consideration of art that is imperfect, for it is only through the former that the latter is possible.

In the third place, there may be enthusiasts who are still inclined to cry, with Gebir,—

‘Is this the mighty ocean, is this all?’

Are we to hold seriously that Music can be explained by any system of laws and regulations, that its influence upon us can be classified under heads and reduced to scientific maxims? Is it not rather degrading to analyse the divine art into tricks of surprise and devices of rhetoric, into this kind of figure and that kind of modulation, into a nice adjustment of curve and harmony and cadence? Where is the ‘fine

careless rapture' of the artist? Where is the inspiration of the poet? Surely it is better that we should ignorantly worship than that we should be turning Apollo into a sophist and setting the Muses to keep school.

Part of this objection has already been met. The true sphere of analysis is not life but the living body, not inspiration but the form in which it is manifested. And herein we may contend that there is a right as well as a wrong use of law. Some rules of Music are purely transitory in their nature, and can therefore only afford an imperfect basis for judgment even in the generation that accepts them. The prohibitions of the old counterpoint, for instance, were in many cases merely conventional limits, determined by the particular characteristics of the human voice; they are therefore no longer binding on our instrumental composers. The restrictions of early harmony were merely retrospective inferences from the actual practice of past compositions: they had no logical validity, and therefore became obsolete. But the laws which here present themselves as a part of the artistic code have a double claim on our acceptance: first, that they are, as a matter of fact, embodied in the greatest works of the greatest masters; and second, that they draw their origin from the fundamental attributes of our human nature. For the essential qualities which underlie the artistic character have altered very little since the earliest authentic record of its history. Revolutions have come and gone, fashions have arisen and have passed away, yet the work that made Athens beautiful is still our type and climax of perfect achievement. Literature has been shaken by the clash of contending parties, it has

submitted to new dynasties and new leaders, yet the great principles of its constitution are the same now as in the time of the *Odyssey*. And Music, though it has grown more slowly and deliberately than the representative arts, may still be shown to have sprung from the same source, and to have followed an even more continuous line of evolution. If, then, we can analyse the conditions that have made that evolution possible, we are not degrading Art into a mere ingenious mechanism, but explaining the necessary laws of its life and progress.

Finally, it must be remembered that if excellence in musical art be difficult to formulate, it is not, for that reason, difficult to apprehend. The beauty of a great masterpiece rises from the supreme and consummate expression of characteristics, which, in a greater or less degree, are common to all normal humanity. No doubt, in different races, there are differences of convention, as there are of scale and instrument and musical language, but convention in itself is always negative, and its sole force is the establishment of temporary limitations. Within their widening scope the whole range of the art gradually extends; within them lie its wonders of purity and sublimity, its treasures of pathos and humour, its contrasts of wise reticence and opulent display. And for the proper appreciation of these gifts, there are no strange or recondite qualities demanded, only receptivity of ear, only sanity of emotion, only patience that is willing to observe, and courage that is ready to speak its mind. The rest is a matter of training and experience: training by which we rouse our faculties to a higher stage of development, experience

by which we learn to equip our criticism with new facts and new relations. In Music it is essentially true that 'admiration grows as knowledge grows': it is equally true that knowledge itself lies open to the attainment of all honest endeavour.

FREDERICK CHOPIN

Like a poet, hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Frederick Chopin



I

WARSAW

WE are more accustomed in literature than in music to find immortality conferred on artists whose total quantity of production is slight or incomplete. Sappho lives in a few lyrics, Villon in a few ballades, Persius is a great satirist with some six hundred lines of verse, Merimée a great novelist with a slender handful of short stories. In all such cases we accept perfection of finish, individuality of note, concentration of effort, as more than compensating for the narrow limits within which the writer has thought fit to be confined : and we even impute it as a virtue that he has not changed the gold of his thought into the more diffuse silver of a meaner standard. But in music, as a rule, our judgment is affected by other considerations. For some reason the composer has generally been more lavish than his brother artists : he has worked more rapidly, perhaps more continuously, and has gained, in proportion, a larger abundance to bestow. Six weeks sufficed Mozart for his

three greatest symphonies: Handel wrote the *Messiah* in less than a month: Schubert created nine of his songs in a single day: and it is therefore little wonder if we have learned to expect some opulence of achievement in our musicians, or even to estimate them, as an innkeeper discriminates his guests, by the amount of their baggage and the number of their retinue.

We shall find an interesting commentary on this view if we turn to the programme of a famous concert, given at Warsaw on February 24, 1818. The principal work performed was a pianoforte concerto which served to bring two names, those of its composer and its interpreter, into a forcible and prominent contrast. The one was a master of established reputation and acknowledged authority, the Hofkapellmeister at Vienna, the friend of Beethoven, the musician whose operas were applauded in every capital, whose symphonies were set in the balance against Haydn's, whose quartetts were declared by dispassionate judges to be the equal of Mozart's. The other was planting his first footsteps in a byway of the art which he was to tread for thirty years with little deviation, satisfied to pluck a posy of flowers from the hedgerow, and lay it down as his offering at the journey's end. The one covered the whole field of composition, and, at the end of his career, could number a list of works which outmatches the industry of almost all his contemporaries. The other, cut short by an early death, has left us a few thin volumes, curiously uniform in style, and restricted, with scarcely an exception, to the limits of a single instrument. Yet the one is as completely forgotten as though he had never lived, while the other

has passed into the company of the immortals. To our ears the name of Adalbert Gyrowetz is of the most forlorn unfamiliarity, it has become 'fantastic, unsubstantial—like Henry Pimpernel and old John Naps of Greece'; but no vicissitude of fortune, no changing fashion of art, can ever obliterate from our memory the image of Frederick Chopin.

It must, however, be added, that Chopin's slenderness of accomplishment in no way indicated any poverty of invention. His work was not, as is sometimes said of Gray's, the laborious tillage of a light soil; rather it was like that Japanese gardening, which intensifies the beauty of a single blossom by cutting off all the rest. The true reason, indeed, is to be found in a point of character, '*Il avait l'esprit écorché vif*,' said the comrade who knew him best, and in these words may be found the whole explanation, both of his life and of his artistic career. Delicate, sensitive, fastidious, he would shrink from committing himself to a decision, lest it should fall short of the highest that he knew. Rapid and brilliant in improvisation, he would spend weeks in writing and rewriting a single page. A pianist of rare and exquisite gifts, he would often feel paralysed by the mere sight of a public audience. Generous, affectionate, and enthusiastic, he was yet too earnest to be forbearing, too susceptible to be tolerant, too exacting to show indulgence, and the same acute criticism with which he visited the actions of others, he applied in an equal measure to his own.

Hence there is a special danger in estimating him from a British standpoint. Our bluff, sturdy manhood has little in common with the keenness and mobility which mark one side of the artistic

temperament, and we have never been very successful at comprehending alien characters or alien nationalities. True, we have advanced beyond the stage of unreasoning hostility towards the stranger who presumes to be more impressionable than ourselves, but for the most part we have only substituted a half-contemptuous compassion which is equally galling, and almost equally unintelligent. A past generation looked on Shelley and wondered that the fires of Heaven delayed their falling; the present age insults Heine with forgiveness, in consideration of the purgatory of his later years; and in like manner, when we hear of Chopin, we think, 'Poor fellow! he was consumptive,' and prepare ourselves to condone the irregularities of his life by some rough and ready diagnosis of physical disease. It seldom occurs to us to reflect that the problem may be too complex for so easy a solution, and that, before it can be solved at all, it must at least be stated correctly. As a matter of fact, Chopin's life was singularly blameless, and, until its close, singularly free from the material conditions of trouble. No doubt there is a deep pathos in the record of a death which seems to us premature: no doubt the pathos is intensified by the spectacle of failing strength and encroaching sickness; but it is an entirely false application of perspective to let our view of the end obliterate our view of the whole. And there is otherwise little hardship in the case. The feeble health was compensated, at least in part, by friendship, by affection, and by fame such as few musicians have enjoyed in their lifetime. It is not history to draw fancy pictures of a querulous invalid, a continuous

burden to himself and to all who cared for him; still less to fill page after page with unsubstantiated rumours of ill-usage and neglect. Chopin's relation to his friends was neither that of tyrant nor that of victim, and his career, if, like every other, it was traversed by heavy clouds, at least had its bursts of sunshine and its long days of genial warmth.

He was born on 1st March 1809,¹ at the little village of Zelazowa Wola, near Warsaw. His father, Nicholas Chopin, was a French *émigré*, possibly with Polish blood in his veins, who, after sundry vicissitudes, had settled down as tutor in the family of Countess Skarbek, and had there met and married a Polish lady called Justina Krzyzanowska. Frederick, the only son, was the third of four children, and so was privileged to pass his earliest years in the Oriental despotism of a nursery peopled by admiring sisters.

In 1810 Nicholas Chopin carried off his household to the Capital, where he had been appointed Professor of French at the new Lyceum. At first there seems to have been some stress of poverty: salaries were low, life was unsettled; no one knew what quarter of Europe would next be set ablaze by the indomitable activity of Napoleon. However, in 1814, the Congress of Vienna established a kingdom of Poland, shorn, no doubt, of its border territories, and held in check by the suzerainty of Russia, but still governed by a Pole as viceroy, and recognising

¹ So says Karasowski, who was intimately acquainted with the Chopins, and was entrusted by them with the materials for an authoritative biography. The monument in the Holy Cross Church at Warsaw gives March 2, 1809, as the date. Liszt and Fétis both give 1810. It is a salient instance of the carelessness with which the records of Chopin's life have been treated.

Polish as its official language. This was far from meeting the wishes of the 'patriotic party,' which looked to France as its ally and to the Emperor as its protector, but at least it ensured some measure of independence, and, after the next year, a certain prospect of peace and tranquillity.

As might be expected, the change of political condition produced an immediate effect on the national temper. Warsaw, which, in 1812, was one of the most miserable of cities, began in 1815 to recover the signs of material prosperity. Trade was developed, schools were opened, the great houses welcomed back their exiles, and the country at large shook off its dream of disquietude and set its face hopefully to the future. Only in secret rose an occasional murmur that Russia was an alien power, that the days of Suvorov had not passed out of memory, that the Viceroy was a mere puppet in the hands of the Emperor Alexander, and that the new Commander-in-Chief was a truculent savage who needed all the eloquence of his Polish wife to keep him from open oppression. Apart from these scattered voices of discontent, there can be no doubt that the nation rejoiced at its deliverance from German officialism, and, with characteristic buoyancy, resumed the business of life, and not a little of its brilliance.

Naturally, the Chopins bore their part in the general advance. Even while the fate of Poland was still in the balance, two fresh appointments had been added to the Professorship at the Lyceum, and the gradual restoration of the great families opened the way for a private school, over which no one was so capable of presiding as Count Skar-

bek's old tutor. This enlargement of means was the only thing wanted to make Chopin's childhood a period of almost ideal happiness. His parents seem to have been altogether worthy of the affection which he lavished on them: the father kindly, honourable, upright, firm in the government of his family, and unwearied in the administration of its resources; the mother bright, active and tender-hearted, full of folklore and household recipes, sincere in religion, charitable in conduct, gentle and courteous in speech. Then the house was visited by all manner of interesting people—poets, professors, politicians,—who would talk to Nicholas Chopin about his old home in half-Polish Lorraine, where men still spoke of the good Duke Stanislaus, or would exchange memories of the war and hopes for the new *régime*. And for the more important aspects of life there could be no better companions than the three sisters—Louisa, who knew everything in the lesson-books; Isabella, who was practical, and could always find things when they were lost; and Emily, the best of playfellows, who told the most delightful stories, and had a special talent for making believe. Almost every birthday there were theatricals, almost every evening there was music for who would listen—all around was a world of flowers and sunshine, of pleasant looks and pleasant voices, of 'short task and merry holiday.' It is a poignant contrast to turn to the four children, less fortunate but not less gifted, who during these same years were writing their journals and acting their solitary plays in the bleak parsonage at Haworth.

Very little can be ascertained about Chopin's musical education. We know that his pianoforte teacher

was a Bohemian called Adalbert Zywny, and that he learned harmony and counterpoint from Elsner, but we have scarcely any information as to the extent and value of the lessons. It is certain that in after life his system of fingering was entirely original and unorthodox, from which we may conjecture that Zywny never really taught him to play a scale—and indeed there is some tradition that the Professor was a violinist who only took to the piano as a second string, and who allowed the boy to spend most of his time in improvisation. Elsner was a good-tempered, easy-going old kapellmeister, who did his pupil the greatest service by teaching him to love Bach, and then allowed him to go his own way without further supervision. The works which Chopin published during his student period have little or no scope for counterpoint, but they show beyond controversy that he and his master were equally indifferent to what is known as classical structure. On the other hand, his sense of harmony was always admirable, and there can be no doubt that he owed much of its development to the wise care, and still wiser reticence, with which the laws and prohibitions were explained to him. Again, Liszt is probably right in drawing special attention to the moral value of Elsner's teaching. With a conscientious pupil the method of encouragement is the easiest possible way to inculcate a feeling of responsibility, and the most successful teacher is he who knows how to train mediocrity and to leave genius a free hand. It should be added that Chopin's relation to his two masters was always cordial and affectionate. As late as 1835, we find him docketing a letter from Zywny, a curious, formal, kindly note, full of good wishes and fine

language, while to Elsner he always looked with a boy's hero-worship, as to a mentor whose advice was never to be neglected, and whose praise was the highest of commendations.

We may well understand that, as a pupil, he was best left alone. His precocity was something phenomenal, even in the decade which saw Mendelssohn at Weimar and Liszt at Paris: before he was eight years old he was a pianist of established reputation; before he was nine he played one of Gyrowetz' pianoforte concertos at a charity concert; at ten he ventured into the presence of the Grand Duke Constantine, and offered that awful potentate a military march for use among the troops. Of course, every one petted and caressed him, and called him the young Mozart. Countesses and princesses danced to his mazurkas, or sat by the piano while he improvised: Royalty itself sent down a great glittering clattering chariot, and galloped him off to play at the Belvidere: from end to end of the brilliant, light-hearted, pleasure-loving city he moved at his ease, like the young Prince Charming in a fairy tale, sure of a welcome, sure of applause, and accepting all that society offered with a child's careless enjoyment.

An atmosphere so heavy with adulation might well have poisoned a nature less lovable or less simple-hearted. But its only effect on Chopin was to increase still further his natural refinement of manner and to accentuate his intolerance of anything like rudeness or vulgarity. There does not seem to have been a trace of vanity in his constitution. He played 'as the linnets sing,' without effort, without premeditation, and without any apparent idea that his performance was out of the common. At his *début*,

in the charity concert of 1818, the only feature which struck him as exciting any admiration was his lace collar; the watch given him two years later by Catalani only appealed to him as a new toy of unusual splendour: in all the record of his childhood there is not a single indication of petulance or conceit. We can easily reconstruct his portrait:—a little, frail, delicate elf of a boy, with fair hair and a prominent nose, the face redeemed from ugliness by the wonderful brown eyes and the quick intelligence of expression: a temperament which was keen, nervous and changeable, a character rapid and alert, bubbling over with effervescent spirits, playful, affectionate, and sensitive. He was already an accomplished actor and a born mimic, full of odd sayings and harmless mischief, clever and imaginative, utterly devoid of self-consciousness or affectation. His one defect was his want of a boy's adventurousness, and his disinclination to out-door sports and exercises. We can hardly imagine his tearing his clothes or getting his feet wet. But we must remember that this disability is not always to be regarded as an unpardonable sin, and that, ever since the days of Euripides, there has been a feud between the poet and the athlete. Had Chopin been more robust, he would doubtless have taken life with the greater equanimity—and we should have lost one of the most characteristic figures in the history of Music.

Unfortunately many of the anecdotes which are current about his boyhood bear the clear impress of mythology. The utmost we can say of them is, that they appear to contain some elements of truth which have been overlaid by enthusiastic biographers until they are almost unrecognisable. We can well believe

for instance, that he once made an April fool of an irascible landowner by sending him a sham business-letter in Yiddish ; but M. Karasowski, who tells the story, ruins it by gravely adding that the child played his trick with the deliberate moral purpose of curing his neighbour's temper ; and, worse still, that the sermon was successful. Again, it is quite possible that on one insubordinate afternoon, when the pupils had proved too many for the usher, Chopin appeared on the scene and kept them quiet by improvising romances ; but then we are further told that his representation of night, on the pianoforte, was so realistic that it sent all the boys to sleep. No doubt these embellishments are innocuous enough, though they add nothing which it is of any moment to preserve, but the uncritical fancy which accepts them as historical, offers but an ominous prospect for the discussion of the later life. That the record of Chopin's manhood is still a fruitful theme for controversy is mainly owing to the fact that it has been treated by writers who, for the most part, show a lamentable disregard of the value of evidence.

In 1824, Chopin was promoted from his father's preparatory school to the fourth class of the Warsaw Lyceum. There he worked hard, rose rapidly, won two or three prizes, and gained the esteem and respect of his school-fellows by developing a remarkable talent for caricature. It must have been an agonising moment when the director confiscated a sheet of paper containing an unflattering portrait of himself, and it says something for the young scapegrace, that the sketch was returned with no heavier rebuke than a sardonic comment on the excellence of the likeness. The first holidays were spent on a

friend's estate in Szafarnia, from which the boy issued to his parents a periodical journal, after the model of the *Warsaw Courier*, and even got one of the daughters of the house to give it an amateur imprimatur, in imitation of the official censorship. The same year witnessed, at some family festival, the production of a new comedy, written in collaboration by Frederick Chopin, aged fifteen, and Emily Chopin, aged eleven. And all this time the dramatist, artist, journalist, and student of Polish history is writing his harmony exercises, playing his Kalkbrenner concertos, composing songs, devising variations, and generally progressing in music as though he had no other occupation to distract him. Grant that the comedy has no great literary value, and that the *Ranz des Vaches* variations are slight and childish, it still remains a marvel that one small head should have exhibited such restless and versatile ability. To find a parallel, we must go back to the golden age of Leonardo and the two Cellini, when all arts lay open and the common lands of knowledge had not yet been enclosed.

Up to 1825 Nicholas Chopin does not seem to have had any idea of making his son a professional musician. The first essays had been so many in number, and so various in impulse, that they might well account for some feeling of uncertainty, but by the end of 1824 the boy's activity had begun to take a more settled direction, and the events of the next year are mainly musical. First, there were two concerts, on March 27 and June 10, at the former of which Chopin was set to improvise on an instrument with the amazing name of *Æolopantaleon*, then the Emperor Alexander, who had come down to Warsaw

to open the Parliamentary Session, sent for the young genius, heard him play, and dismissed him with some august compliments and a diamond ring; while, finally, this approbation of men and gods was succeeded by the Horatian climax of publication. The Rondo in C minor, which was printed this year as Op. 1, is a singular example of Chopin's strength and weakness in composition. The themes are clear, pleasant and melodious, contrasted with great skill, and admirably suited to the pianoforte; but the form is redundant and ill-balanced, the exposition unduly prolonged, and the subsequent treatment hurried and inadequate. No doubt, a concert rondo should not be criticised with the same severity as the rondo movement of a sonata; yet even with all laxity of concession, we can find passages and even pages, through which Elsner ought to have drawn his pencil. That Chopin should have written them is no crime; youth is expected to be extravagant; but his master might have remembered that an artist who, in the phrase of Cherubini, 'puts too much cloth into his coat,' spoils the result, in addition to wasting the material.

The only other compositions which can be assigned to this year with any certainty are the two Mazurkas in G and B flat, which appear among the posthumous work in Breitkopf and Härtel's Edition. Indeed, it is pretty certain that Chopin was still attempting to do too many things at once. By the beginning of 1826 he had shown unmistakable signs of overwork, and in the next holidays he was ordered off to try the whey cure at Bad Reinerz in Prussian Silesia. His experiences of the place are recorded in a letter to his school-fellow Wilhelm Kolberg, and consist mainly

of approval of the scenery, criticisms of the visitors, and caricatures of the local band. The only incident, was a concert which he organised for the benefit of two orphans, the death of whose mother had left them without money enough to return home. For the rest he drank his whey, took sedate walks with his mother and sisters, and even succeeded in persuading himself that he was growing 'stout and lazy.'

The journey home was broken by two or three visits, of which the most important was a short stay at Antonin, the country residence of Prince Radziwill. The Prince was an enthusiastic patron of music, an able and meritorious composer, a good singer and violoncellist, and a pleasant cultivated man, who seemed to have been cast by Fate for the part of Mæcenæ. Apparently he had met Chopin in Warsaw, and shared the interest which all Polish society felt in its new genius. Liszt asserts that he paid for the boy's education, but the statement, which is intrinsically improbable, is categorically denied by Fontana, while the still wilder report that he defrayed the expenses of Chopin's Italian tour, is best answered by the fact that Chopin never set foot inside Italy in his life. However, the tie of hospitality is not likely to have been weakened by the absence of a monetary basis, and the friendship between host and guest was quite as cordial as though they had been debtor and creditor.

Once back in Warsaw, Chopin set himself to prepare for his final examination at the Lyceum, which he passed with something less than his usual distinction, in 1827. The cause of this comparative failure is not hard to divine, for although the compositions of the winter are few and unimportant, there

can be no doubt that Chopin was devoting himself more and more to music, and allowing other interests to sink into the background. And there was another reason. On April 10, his sister Emily, the closest and dearest of all his companions, died of pulmonary disease. She had accompanied her brother to Reinerz, in the hope of checking a malady which medical skill is almost powerless to cure, she had returned with some alleviation of suffering and some hopes of reprieve—and then came the end. We may readily imagine the effect which her death must have produced on the sensitive, affectionate boy from whom, through all her short life, she had been inseparable. It was his first great sorrow, and he was never of a nature to take his sorrows lightly.

As soon as his work set him free, he tried to find solace in some short, fitful periods of travel, and paid a visit to his godmother's house in Posen, and a second to the brother of his old head-master, who was occupying some official post at Danzig. All the winter was spent at home, sketching, revising, polishing, and preparing his compositions for the publisher. By the autumn of the next year he had completed two or three Polonaises,¹ a Nocturne, a Piano Sonata a brilliant Rondo for two pianos, the first movement of the G minor Trio, and, more important than all, the variations on *La ci darem*, which were published in 1830 as Op. 2. It was this last-named work which evoked Schumann's first critical essay, and intro-

¹ The Polonaise in B flat minor, 'Adieu an Wilhelm Kolberg,' appears to have been written on Chopin's departure for Reinerz in 1826. But Fontana calls the three, which were published posthumously as Op. 71, 'les trois premières Polonaises.' Two of them were composed in 1827-8 and the third in 1829.

duced the world at large to Florestan and Eusebius. Sixty years have passed since the essay was printed, and we are in no mind to question its decision. 'Hats off, gentlemen, a genius,' is the only judgment which sums up that wonderful combination of grace and audacity, of delicacy and vigour, of technical display and poetic invention.

The course of the year's work was interrupted by a notable episode. One day at the beginning of September, Dr Jarocki, the zoology professor, came up to call; announced that he had been invited to attend a scientific congress at Berlin, and offered to take Chopin with him as travelling companion. The proposal was readily accepted. Nicholas Chopin, who had by this time entirely acquiesced in his son's choice of a career, was beginning to doubt whether a sufficiently wide field of action and opportunity could be obtained at Warsaw: and, in any case, it was advisable that the young man should see something of the world before he settled down to the duties of his profession. Frederick, too, was overjoyed at the prospect. He cared little for congresses and nothing at all for science, he refused his ticket of admission to the meetings, on the ground that he did not want to pose as 'Saul among the prophets,' but the chances of increasing his musical experience were far too precious to be lost. By the middle of the month he was established at the Hotel Kronprinz, hearing *Fernando Cortez* at the Opera, revelling in Handel's *St Cecilia* at the Singakademie, spending his days in the music library at Schlesinger's, and only idle when some enthusiastic scientist carried him off to spend a reluctant hour in the Zoological Museum.

Three of his letters, preserved by M. Karasowski, give us an amusing picture of his impressions. We can see him, shrinking with suppressed impatience, while the interminable dinner goes on, and Professor Lehmann rests an academic hand on his plate in order to converse across him with Professor Jarocki: we can see him at the Singakademie looking with awe-stricken eyes at Mendelssohn and Spontini, or burning with shame to discover that he has mistaken Alexander von Humboldt for a footman: we can see him making stealthy caricatures and carefully adding the names of the originals, 'in case they should prove to be celebrities.' Everything is noted with a good-natured criticism, the humours of the journey, the cleanliness and order of the streets, the bad taste of the ladies' dresses, and the great final banquet, at which all the sciences sat round the table singing convivial songs, while counterpoint, in the person of Zelter, stood behind a golden goblet and beat time.

It is unlikely that Chopin completed any musical work at Berlin. The first we hear of his *Fantasia* on Polish airs is that he played it at a little post town on the way home, while the diligence was changing horses, but it is more probable that he composed it earlier in the year than that he found time for it amid all the rush of new interests and new distractions. The real value of his visit was that it supplied the need, which every composer feels, of an occasional period of pure receptiveness. Not that the music heard presents itself in any way as a model for imitation: a man may be stimulated to write a string quartett by a course of opera, or be moved to song by a series of symphonies: but the very fact of production involves a certain wear and tear

which is often most easily repaired from outside. And so it is not surprising that, when Chopin returned home, after stopping a couple of days at Posen, and paying his respects to Prince Radziwill, he at once finished his Pianoforte Trio and wrote the Krakowiak, which is the most carefully scored of all his orchestral compositions. His parents gave him a little back room, furnished with a piano and an old writing-desk, and there he sat and elaborated his phrases, complaining piteously when his solitude was invaded by inopportune visitors or unwelcome invitations. Society is the most delightful of patrons, until a man realises that he has his work to do. After that it tends to become something of a tyrant.

In the early part of 1829 Warsaw was visited successively by Hummel and Paganini. For the latter Chopin felt little more than the common admiration, the former he had long regarded as a special tutelary genius, whose exquisite precision of style was at once his ambition and his despair. He was far too modest to recognise the limitations of his hero, and the deeper and truer note which his own temperament was capable of sounding: as yet, if we except the great variations of the preceding year, he had attempted little more than the mastery of exact expression, and in this he regarded Hummel as the best of types with the same loyalty with which he had accepted Elsner as the best of teachers. We have no record of the interview between the two artists. We only know that they met, that they made a good impression on each other, and that their subsequent intercourse bears witness to much cordiality on the elder side, and to an unquestioning and unbroken hero-worship on the younger.

It is possible that this glimpse of the ideal served to bring into sharper relief the narrowness of the Warsaw horizon. In any case, as the summer approached, Chopin grew restless and began to pine for a larger atmosphere and more congenial surroundings. Naturally, his first thought was of Vienna. He had already sent three or four of his manuscripts to try their fortune with Haslinger: and as no answer had come, he found a reasonable excuse for going to attack the publisher in person. He therefore started from home about the middle of July, spent a few days in Cracow, and a few more in Polish Switzerland and Galicia, and finally arrived at his destination on the 31st. Haslinger received him courteously enough, promised to print the *La ci darem* Variations, and strongly urged him to give a concert in order to familiarise the Viennese public with his manner of composition. It is characteristic that this obvious suggestion appeared to Chopin to be wholly impracticable. That he should venture to play in a city which had heard Mozart and Beethoven; that he, a mere provincial, should expect an audience in the metropolis of the musical world; the bare idea seemed an act of presumption beside which the challenge of Marsyas faded into insignificance: and it was only after continued pressure and reiterated encouragement that he finally nerved himself to the attempt. Acquiescence once extorted the arrangements went on smoothly; Würfel got out the bills, Count Gallenberg lent the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, and on August 11—a memorable date in musical history—Chopin made his *début* before a foreign public.

Of course there was the usual disaster at rehearsal

Like all young composers, Chopin insisted on copying his own band parts, and the result was that the Krakowiak had to be cut out of the programme, and the concert marred by an apology. However, the evening made amends. The audience was not numerous, but it was cordial and appreciative; applauded the variations so lustily, that the *tuttis* were inaudible, and finally 'began a regular dance in the back benches,' when Chopin replaced his rondo with an improvisation. The only adverse criticism, from stalls to gallery, was an expression of disappointment, on the part of some unknown lady, that 'the lad had so little presence.' No doubt, like the wife of Charles Lamb's friend, she 'had expected to see a tall, fine, officer-looking man,' who would look well in uniform.

Fortified by his success, Chopin gave a second concert on August 18, at which the Krakowiak was produced, and the variations were repeated. This time the audience was larger, and the reception still more encouraging. Several of the musical notabilities of Vienna came to offer their applause—Gyrowetz, with the queer, wrinkled face and the kindly eyes, that belied the querulous mouth; Lachner, young, ardent and restless; Schuppanzigh, still chuckling at Beethoven's jests on his corpulence; Czerny, all high forehead, big spectacles and bland expression. Everybody was warm and friendly, full of congratulations on the triumph which, as the manager was careful to explain, 'could not be due to the ballet, because that had been given before,' and Chopin soon found himself arguing with a press of people who wanted him to fix the date for his third appearance. But on this point he was ob-

durate. He had only given his second concert lest the Warsaw public should think that he was dissatisfied with the first. The Viennese had been very kind, but he was quite sure that they had seen enough of him for one visit. He was full of gratitude, he had enjoyed himself immensely, but the fact was that he had made up his mind to start for Prague the next day, and he could not alter his arrangements. And so, in spite of all entreaties, he left Vienna on the evening of August 19, without even waiting for the newspaper reports of his two recitals.

It is interesting to compare his letters with the various notices and critiques that appeared after his departure. 'I was not hissed,' he writes on August 12, 'so don't be anxious about my artistic reputation. . . . My friends swear that they heard nothing but praise, and that, until the spontaneous outburst of applause, not one of them clapped or uttered a bravo. . . . I am curious to hear what Herr Elsner will say to all this. Perhaps he disapproves of my playing at all. But I was so besieged on all sides that I had no escape, and I don't seem to have committed a blunder by my performance.' And again, on August 19, 'My reception yesterday was still more hearty. I know I have pleased the ladies and the musicians. Only the thorough Germans seem to have been dissatisfied. . . . When I told the manager that I hoped to come back to Vienna for the purpose of improving myself, he answered that for such a reason I should never need to come, since I had nothing more to learn. Of course these are mere compliments; still, one does not listen to them unwillingly. At any rate, for the future, I shall

not be regarded as a student. Blahetka tells me that he wonders at my learning it all in Warsaw. I answered that from Zywny and Elsner even the greatest donkey must gain something.' In all this there is a tone of simple, unconscious modesty which is very pleasant to notice. There are not many men in Chopin's position who would have taken their first triumph so easily, and still fewer who would have been at the pains to disclaim the assistance of a *claque*.

On the other hand, the newspapers speak with a much firmer tone. The *Wiener Theaterzeitung* noted a touch of genius in the compositions, and gave special praise to the clearness and delicacy of their interpretation. 'He plays very quietly,' it said, 'with little emphasis, and with none of that rhetorical *aplomb* which is considered by virtuosos as indispensable. . . . He was recognised as an artist of whom the best may be expected as soon as he has heard more. . . . He knows how to please, although, in his case, the desire to make good music predominates noticeably over the desire to give pleasure.' Such commendation from the acknowledged leader of Viennese criticism at once set the tone to the minor journals; and the whole city swelled its voice into a full chorus of approval. Even the distant *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* caught an echo of the enthusiasm, and hailed Chopin as a 'brilliant meteor,' who had 'appeared on the horizon without any previous blast of trumpets.'

From Vienna he went on to Prague, where he met Pixis, Klengel and some other celebrities; and from Prague to Teplitz, where he spent an evening at Prince Clary's, and electrified the company by

his improvisations. The westernmost point of his travel was Dresden. As a devoted admirer of *Der Freischütz*, he naturally felt an interest in the city where Weber had been kapellmeister, and he bore with him letters of introduction which would ensure his admission into the centre of its artistic society. It is probably in consequence of his admiration for Weber that he writes rather cavalierly about his interview with Morlacchi. Musical enmities have a way of lasting, and Chopin was always more vehement in the quarrels of his heroes than he was in his own. For the rest, he paid his tribute of homage to the Gallery, stayed to see a performance of *Faust* at the theatre, and then hurried homeward to supplement his letter with the thousand details that are always lost between pen and paper. Indeed, there was plenty to relate. He had left Warsaw with a reputation little wider than the limits of his native province: now, after two eventful months, he was returning to match the wreath of welcome with the laurels of a victorious campaign.

A few short weeks and the conqueror is in the dust. Nothing in all Chopin's life is more striking than the sudden and entire change which followed as a reaction from the excitements of the summer. His letters grew morbid, anxious, irritable; the clear-cut sentences wander off into vagueness and incoherence; the rapid judgment becomes hesitating and irresolute. Through all this dark time there runs the golden thread of an ideal friendship; but it is knotted and entwined with a love-story that can only seem to us singularly unreal and purposeless. Many of its details are absolutely unknown,

but there is little need that we should know them. We are only concerned with its effect on Chopin's character; with the presage through which it may lead us to a better and fuller comprehension of his subsequent life. And herein the story, imperfect though it be, may serve us as a true guide. The two tragic episodes of Chopin's career, for all their unlikeness, have their explanation in a single point of temperament: the weakness which, in later years, lost the comradeship of George Sand, was but another form of that nervous sensibility which now called up, for its torment, the shadowy and fugitive vision of Constance Gladkowska.

Even at the outset there is no tone of hopefulness. 'I have, perhaps to my misfortune, already found my ideal,' he writes to his friend Woyciechowski; and a little later, 'It is bitter to have no one with whom one can share joy or sorrow, to feel one's heart oppressed, and to be unable to express one's complaints to any human soul.' All this time—it is a grotesque touch which somehow adds to the pathos—he had never spoken to her, and had only seen her occasionally as she was taking her lessons at the Conservatorium. At least six months had elapsed before he made her acquaintance, and even then we have no record of intimacy, no interchange of letters, no word of lover's vows; nothing but idle conjecture and a few wild confessions of doubt and despair. Warsaw had become intolerable to him. Come what may, he will not spend another winter at home. He will go to Berlin, to Vienna, to Paris, to Italy; anywhere to escape. And then comes a revulsion, and he fancies himself dying in a foreign land, with the unconcerned physician and the paid servants waiting beside his deathbed.

Plans are made only to be reversed; projects are formed only to be abandoned; and every change is made the occasion for some fresh complaint, or some new exhibition of a self-inflicted wound.

This is not the manner of true passion. It is not love which degrades a chivalrous nature, which torments generosity with suspicion, and turns activity into a feverish impatience. Grant that the noblest character has its ignoble aspect; its concealed depths which an unforeseen storm may sometimes lash to the surface; yet we cannot look upon a current which is wholly turbid, and characterise it by the highest name in all man's vocabulary. Grant that every lover has his moments of unreason, fits of groundless ill-temper, of disproportionate remorse, of jealousy that is roused by a look and quieted by a word, yet we are here bidden to mistake the accidents for the substance, and to describe as love a shadow which is cast from no sun. The truth is that Chopin's passion was not a cause, but a symptom; not a power which influenced his life, but a direction of hectic energy that must itself be traced back to a remoter source. He was standing at the verge of manhood: always nervous and impressionable, he was come to the time when strength is weakest and courage the most insecure: he had just passed through the bewilderment of his first great enterprise, and had emerged to breathe an atmosphere electric with change and heavy with disquietude. It is little wonder that he lost his true self, and strayed from his appointed course. He would have been more than human if he had not felt some stress of uncertainty, or followed his restless impulses in the absence of a surer guide.

Yet the affection which is lacking to his romance is poured, in full and continuous profusion, upon his friend. 'You do not require my portrait,' he writes to Woyciecowski in November; 'I am always with you, and shall never forget you to the end of my life.' And later, 'You have no idea how much I love you. What would I not give to embrace you once again.' He suggests that they should travel abroad together, and then, by a refinement of sensibility, adds that it would be more delightful if they started separately, 'and met somewhere by chance.' All the compositions are discussed with entire frankness, all the plans submitted for advice and counsel; even omens and presentiments are called in and made to bear their witness to community of purpose. The very complaints take a brighter tone when we realise their absolute trust, and their certain expectation of sympathy. It is as though Chopin shrank from the thought of his passion as a child shrinks from the darkness, and turned to take refuge in the strong arms that he knew were waiting to protect him. He was never self-reliant, never strong enough to face the world alone. Now, in the time of his trouble, he looked to his friend for comfort, just as, ten years before, he would have taken some boyish sorrow to his mother.

It must not be supposed that this period of mental depression is entirely occupied with lamentations. Troilus may be 'weaker than a woman's tear' when he thinks of Cressida, yet he still has hours in which he can shake off his lethargy and take his place in the field or the council chamber; and even we must add, hours when he can find solace in

the company of the white-armed Helen. Indeed, in spite of his troubles, Chopin seems to have been fairly busy during the autumn of 1829. By October 3, the 'Adagio' of his F minor Concerto was completed;¹ by October 20, the Finale had been sketched, and at least one of the *Études* written: then came a week's visit to Prince Radziwill, from whose house we hear something of a new Polonaise for Violoncello, and something, also, about the beauty and intelligence of Princess Wanda. 'I should like her to practise my work,' writes this distracted lover; 'it would be delightful to have the privilege of placing her pretty fingers upon the keys.'

The winter was spent quietly at home. Chopin finished his Concerto, showed it to Elsner for approval, and then set about looking for some opportunity of performance. It was a long time since he had played in public at Warsaw, and the newspaper notices from Vienna had aroused fresh interest which he thought it advisable to satisfy. So in March 1830 he gave two concerts, both of which were conspicuously successful. At the first, indeed, there was some complaint that he did not play loud enough; but, on hearing it, he sent to Vienna for one of Graff's pianos, and disarmed even this effort of criticism at the second. It is noticeable, as an indication of musical taste in 1830, that at both concerts the F minor Concerto was divided, the Allegro given by itself as a separate piece, and

¹ Not the E minor Concerto, as M. Karasowski asserts. The fact is put beyond dispute by a letter of May 15, 1830, in which Chopin says that the Adagio of the latter work is still unfinished. Both movements, by the way, are marked *Larghetto* in the score.

the Adagio and Rondo following later in the programme. We may remember that even in Paris it was the fashion of the time to give Beethoven's symphonies piecemeal, and to intersperse the movements with *bravura* songs and *divertimenti* for the French horn. It seems unlikely that a stage manager would ever present one of Shakespear's plays with portions of the *School for Scandal* between the acts; but music has always lagged behind the other arts in its appreciation of structure, and if Berlioz could mishandle Beethoven, we need not be surprised at Chopin's tearing his own work in pieces for fear that the audience should suspect it of continuity. In any case, he seems to have lost nothing by the sacrifice, for the house was crowded, the applause vehement, and the receipts, after all expenses had been paid, amounted to the respectable figure of 5000 florins.

Summer came, with its presage of revolution. The great wave rolling eastward from Paris did not break on Warsaw until November; but as early as May there were signs on the horizon, and a murmur of expectation in the air. The Diet, which had not met for five years, was suddenly convened; the irregularities of the Russian administration were more freely criticised: and although the Czar had prohibited the publication of debates, there still remained sufficient means to show the people at large that its discontent was finding official utterance. Naturally this assemblage of senators gathered after it all the pomp and circumstance of Polish society. As the months wore on, the city filled with a crowd of nobles, and, while the halls of audience were busy with political intrigue, the ballrooms opened their doors

to a music that seemed to have caught some echo from the night before Waterloo. War was almost certainly imminent; but until it came the hours uplifted their burden of song and dance, lest the silence should crave too ominously for the sound of cannon.

To Chopin, patriot as he was, the musical aspect of the season seems to have been the most important. Possibly in his seclusion rumours of wars found no space to enter: at any rate, there is no hint in his letters that he foresaw the storm, or that he was seriously occupied with anything more public than his *soirées* and his concerts. There was, indeed, plenty to hear and plenty to enjoy. Some of the greatest artists in Europe presented themselves at Warsaw:—Mdlle. de Belleville, immortalised by the praise of Schumann; Lipinski, the famous violinist; Henrietta Sontag, the acknowledged rival of Catalani and Pasta. Of all these Chopin writes with his usual generous appreciation, unaffectedly delighted with their successes, and 'not at all surprised' that he is not asked to play at a Court party when they are present. Then followed Constance Gladkowska's *début* as an operatic singer, and the lover is divided between his pleasure in her triumph and his reawakened consciousness of a hopeless passion. Once more the old irresolution returns; he decides to go, but cannot tear himself away; he waits on aimlessly, wondering from day to day whether the morrow will bring counsel, despising himself for his chain, yet not strong enough to break it. The suspense was beginning to tell upon his health. Heller, who passed through Warsaw in 1830, speaks of him as pale and hollow-eyed, little more than a shadow of his former,

brighter self. And yet it is uncertain whether he had spent an hour with 'his Constantia' since his return from Antonin, nearly a year before; while it is quite clear, from his own letters, that during all that time he had never visited her.¹

Surely it is one of the most inexplicable of dramas. The whole period which it occupies is of less than two years: eighteen months have elapsed, and we have not yet seen the heroine. We only guess at her darkly from the hero's soliloquies, or the rare secrets which he commends to the bosom of his confidant. We are in the fourth act, and have advanced to no further situation than was disclosed in the opening scene. It is true that for a few weeks in the autumn of 1830 the two actors are brought into a closer relationship: that she sang for him at his concert in October, and that she gave him a ring on his departure from Warsaw: but then, just as we are beginning to attain to some comprehension of the plot, the curtain falls, and there has been neither recognition nor catastrophe. Nor is the epilogue any less inconclusive. The farewell gift, which should have been the beginning of a more intimate romance, is virtually the end of the whole story. After Chopin had left his home, he seems to have held no further communication, other than indirect, with the woman whom he believed himself to love; in a few months her name has dropped out of his letters: and when she married, about a year later, he is said to have heard the news with a momentary outburst of brief anger, and then to have dismissed it from his recollection. And even during the days of his thralldom, he can forget his

¹ See the letter of Sept. 4, 1830, quoted by Professor Niecks.

troubles whenever he is interested in his work. It is only when he is wearied or overwrought that the image of his love recurs, with its invariable train of forebodings and regrets: forebodings that he will find inaccessible a height which he never tries to climb: regrets for lost opportunities which he has never attempted to seize. As to her own attitude in the matter, we are even more at fault. We have no means of determining to what extent she looked with favour upon his suit, or to what extent she even trusted in its sincerity. We have no right to impute blame to her: we have no standpoint for imputation. All we can say is, that if Chopin's passion had been wholly visionary, this is the way in which it would have expressed itself. Of the joy, the hope, the impetus of true love there is not one recorded word: his highest point of stimulation is the desire to 'tell his piano' of the sorrow that she has brought him: his brightest hope of communion with her is that when he dies his ashes may be spread out under her feet.

It is pleasanter to look upon the more active side of Chopin's last summer in Warsaw. In spite of the social distractions which the season inevitably brought in its retinue, he worked away steadily at his *E minor Concerto*, finished it by the middle of August, and produced it, with his usual good fortune, at his third and last concert, on October 11. In addition, he composed what he modestly calls 'a few insignificant pieces,' and sketched or projected some works of larger scale—a concerto for two pianos, a polonaise with orchestra, and the like. Whether these ever came into complete existence is a matter of dispute: here, as elsewhere, the record of Chopin's life is too broken and imperfect to admit any tone of certainty:

but, in either event, they testify to some acceptance of the 'beatitude of labour.' The results of a man's effort are a free gift to succeeding generations ; it is in the effort itself that he finds his own reward.

As the winter approached, plans for departure grew more definite and more concrete. Chopin had cried 'Wolf' so often that his friends might well be excused for doubting the reality of his intentions, but this time it appeared that he was actually in earnest, and at the beginning of November he started. Even now he had no very clear idea of his destination. It was to be Vienna first, so much was certain, but after Vienna it might be Berlin, where Prince Radziwill could ensure him introductions, or it might be Italy, where he could bear his credentials to royalty at Milan, or it might be Paris, which was then the goal of almost every artist in Europe. 'I am going out into the wide world,' he writes, with a touch of knight-errantry foreign to his usual nature. Curiously enough, he seems to have had from the beginning a presentiment that he would never return to Poland ; and when, at the first stage from Warsaw, Elsner met him with the pupils of the Conservatorium, and presented him with a silver cup full of Polish earth, the strange little ceremonial must have added force and ratification to his thought. Moreover, the presentiment came true. The nineteen years of life which remained to him only widened his separation from his native country ; his exile, though voluntary, proved to be none the less irrevocable ; and as the towers of Warsaw sank behind him on the horizon, there faded with them all but the memory of a home which he was never to see again.

II

PARIS—AND AN EPISODE

AFTER the good leisurely fashion of the time, Chopin took nearly four weeks over his journey to Vienna. His first halting-place was Kalisz, where he was joined by his friend Woyciecowski, and thence the two travelled together through Breslau, Dresden and Prague, enjoying to the full that highest of human pleasures which is constituted by a clear road, brisk horses, and a single companion. The incidents, as recorded in his letters, are not of any great importance—impressions of the theatre at Breslau, renewal of old acquaintanceships at Dresden, and so forth—but the letters themselves are interesting, as showing how entirely he had recovered his spirits under the change of scene and circumstance. Everything is delightful, everybody is cordial, all prospects of the future career are painted in rose-colour, and the darkest moments of uncertainty are caused by his terror at the sight of the Saxon ladies, in their panoply of knitting-needles, or by the temptation, which he is at some pains to resist, of 'kicking out the bottom' from his first sedan chair. In a character so transparent, even these evanescent bubbles of humour acquire a certain significance. For the moment, Chopin's tone is equally free from

regret or apprehension ; for the moment, this exile from his country has succeeded in escaping from his recent self.

And yet, it was a bold challenge to fortune. On the one side, a world which is usually too busy to occupy itself with new aspirants, which grants no favour that cannot be claimed as a right, and is even less ready to show mercy to the conquered than to offer its applause to the conqueror : on the other, a boy of twenty-one, with delicate and fastidious appetites, with no experience of privation, no conception of the value of money, no settled habits of prudence or circumspection, equipped, it is true, with a flashing weapon of genius, but singularly ill provided with the ordinary armour of defence. It would have been no wonder if he had thought the bastions impregnable and the towers impossible to scale : if he had looked upon the camp life as coarse and uncouth, if he had found its discipline intolerable, its hardships degrading, and its pleasures typified by the rude laughter and boisterous jests of the canteen. Small wonder, either, if his comrades had set him down as a carpet-knight ; an exquisite, better skilled to pay compliments to the women than to bear his part among the men ; a dandy, whose chief care was the set of his clothes and the fragrance of his violets ; a precisian, who was altogether devoid of redeeming vices ; an idealist, who spent his days in pursuit of the unattainable, instead of taking life as it came, and letting ready action compensate for defective strategy. And in such an estimate there would have been a certain measure of truth. If, in order to be a good man, it is first necessary to be a good animal, we may admit at once that Chopin's virility was im-

perfect. There is no doubt that, to the end of his life, he was characterised by a super-sensitive refinement, which, fifty years ago, would have been described as feminine. But now, at the outset of his career, it is well to notice that he was by no means unprovided with the means of success. He was already one of the best pianists in Europe. He had discovered a secret of musical expression more readily understood and appreciated than that of any contemporary composer, with the exception of Mendelssohn. He was gifted with a great charm of manner, and an unusual power of making friends. And when it is added that he was only once in any great stress of poverty, it will be seen that his equipment was less incomplete than is generally imagined. After all, the dandies have played their part in history. Claverhouse was a dandy; Lovelace was a dandy; Sir Philip Sydney himself was censured by Milton for being 'vain and amatorious': and if a man can be something of a fop, and yet bear himself gallantly in the battle of arms, how much more shall he do so in the battle of life.

At the same time, we must confess that, in his first encounter with destiny, the hero was visited with a signal defeat. Before he had been a week in Vienna, news came that Warsaw had risen in revolt against the Russians; there was word of riot in the streets, of danger to the house; and Chopin, after a few hours of irresolution, started off to follow his friend Woyciecowski, who had gone at once to join the insurgents. On the way his determination broke down: his presence could avail nothing; it would only add to the disquietude of his parents; he had better wait for further tidings, for some

message or injunction which would relieve him from taking the initiative. Without further thought he changed his plans, and returned to Vienna, waiting there in a transport of grief and anxiety for the letters which a man of prompter courage would have forestalled. As the days wore on, the bulletins grew more reassuring; for a time, at any rate, the cloud of peril rolled away from the city: the Poles had an army of 60,000 men in the field, and, in spite of the enormous forces of the Emperor Nicholas, were confident of success. Still Chopin lingered on, ready to start at the lightest summons, but not strong enough to take the first step of his own motion, until the noise of battle had passed to the Russian frontier, and he could write once more about his life and his surroundings.

Apparently the outlook was less encouraging than it had been in 1828. Vienna, since the death of Schubert, was passing through a period of musical inactivity, and the prospects of concert-giving were not very bright. Managers who had been ready enough to welcome Chopin when he played gratuitously, began to hang back now that he demanded payment; and the public, after its golden age of the classics, professed itself satisfied with the *kapellmeistermusik* of Seyfried, and the dance-tunes of Strauss and Lanner. During the whole six months of Chopin's stay in the Austrian capital, he only gave one concert, and that, as we learn from M. Karasowski, was thinly attended and poorly paid. For the rest, his letters contain little more than the diary of a casual visitor:—operas at the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, dinners with his friend Dr Malfatti, a few criticisms of Thalberg, a few words of enthusiasm for

Slavik ; the whole lightened, every now and again, by some amusing story or some half-dozen lines of quaint description. His tone changes with every varying mood : at one moment he breaks into passionate regret that he is still absent from his home : at another he speaks of himself as enjoying his enforced idleness, as wonderfully restored in health, and as finding many acquaintances and much pleasant companionship. But it is clear that, whatever his temper, he was in no way to replenish his resources or advance his existing reputation.

By the middle of 1831 he had made up his mind to proceed to Paris. To return home would be merely to confess himself beaten : Italy was put out of the question by its political troubles ; Berlin, with all its opportunities, was hardly the ideal residence for a Polish artist. All reasons pointed to the land with which he was in the closest sympathy : the land which had given birth to his father, which had been the ally of his nation, which had always shown its warmest hospitality to his countrymen. Accordingly he started on July 20, travelled slowly through Munich and Stuttgart, and finally arrived at his destination about the end of the autumn. His two halting-places are both of some moment in the history of his life. At Munich he gave his last public concert to a German-speaking audience, playing his E minor Concerto and his Fantasia on Polish Airs : at Stuttgart he heard the news that Warsaw had been captured by the Russians, and that the hopes of the revolution were lying under the ruin of its walls. Fortunately his parents were safe. There was no personal anxiety to embitter his grief at the national disaster. But, none the

less, the blow sank deep, and left a scar which lasted indelibly. With all his weakness, Chopin had an intense love for his country, and the dirge¹ in which he mourned her downfall remains as one of the truest and saddest utterances of despairing patriotism.

So ends a year which, on its artistic side, is little more than a line of cleavage between the two main divisions of the story. Before it, Chopin is a boy, studying with his masters, secure under the protection of his home, and looking with expectant eyes upon a great world of which he hardly knows the outskirts: after it, he is a man, holding his fate in his own hands, living in a foreign city, surrounded with new hopes, new occupations, and new friendships. As Warsaw in the first period, so Paris in the second is the centre on which every aspect of the life is focussed. Poland has played her part—she has ceased to be counted among the nations: for the future, it is French blood that claims its kindred, and French loyalty that offers its allegiance.

And, indeed, Chopin could have chosen no city which would give him less feeling of transference. He found Paris full of a cordial sympathy with everything Polish: dramas, founded on the insurrection, drawing crowds to the theatres; cries of '*Vive les Polonais*' echoing in the streets; ovations to General Ramorino, who had taken arms against Russia, and had not despaired of the Republic. A few letters of introduction served to open the doors of artistic society: Paër, Baillot, even Cherubini offered a kindly welcome to the newcomer: Hiller

¹ The so-called *Étude* in C minor, Op. 10, No. 12.

and Franchomme were soon among his fast friends : and the early days were passed in a rush of concert and opera, in admiration of the fine Conservatoire Orchestra, or in open-eyed wonder at the roulades of Pasta and Malibran.

A short time after his arrival, he went to call upon Kalkbrenner, in hopes that the great teacher would consent to give him lessons. Kalkbrenner heard him play, approved, noted some deviations from the established method, and offered to take him as a pupil if he would promise to serve a full apprenticeship of three years. The condition was somewhat prohibitive, for Chopin had his own way to make, and his own living to earn ; but with characteristic docility he undertook to consider the proposal, and wrote off at once to Elsner for advice. The old master's answer was, on the whole, dissuasive. It was unadvisable, he said, that Chopin should restrict himself too closely to the piano : there were other forms of the art—quartetts, symphonies, and, above all, operas—which might establish his name on a more lasting foundation. Besides, a too continuous adherence to one method, however perfect, would tend to destroy individuality of touch and substitute a mere mechanical proficiency for the freedom of original thought. A genius 'should be allowed to follow his own path and make his own discoveries.' So, fortunately for Music, Chopin decided to decline the offer ; though the cordiality of his relation with Kalkbrenner is testified by many passages of intimacy, and by the dedication of the E minor Concerto. There can be no doubt that the proposal was made in good faith, and that it was rejected with some hesitation. The only matters

of comment are the modesty with which Chopin suggested a new period of studentship, and the grounds on which Elsner recommended him to dismiss the idea.

Early in 1832 Chopin made his first appearance before a Parisian public. The concert, organised for the benefit of the Polish refugees, was no great financial success, but it served to bring into notice the second concerto and some of the early mazurkas and nocturnes. One of the most interesting features in the programme was an enormous work of Kalkbrenner's for six pianofortes, played by the composer and Chopin in *concertino*, together with Hiller, Osborne, Stamaty and Sowinski as accompanists: a disposition of forces which plainly indicates that the newcomer was already recognised as a leader by some of the best executants in Paris. We may add that, artistically speaking, the *début* was a veritable triumph. The audience applauded heartily, Mendelssohn offered his warmest congratulations, even Fétis grew genial and appreciative; and when, at a charity concert in March, Chopin succeeded in scoring a second victory, it is little wonder that he found his position established beyond dispute. He might well write to his friends at home,—‘*Me voilà lancé.*’ The society of Paris lionised him with the same fervour as the society of Warsaw: evening after evening was occupied with visitors or filled with invitations: pupils began to present themselves; concert managers solicited his services; and before long he shared with Liszt the honour of being the most fashionable musician of the day. ‘I move in the highest circles,’ he writes, ‘and I don’t know how I got there. But

you are credited with more talent if you have been heard at a *soirée* of the English or Austrian Ambassador. Among the Paris artists I enjoy general esteem and friendship; men of reputation dedicate their compositions to me even before I have paid them the same compliment. Pupils from the Conservatoire—even private pupils of Moscheles, Herz and Kalkbrenner—come to me to take lessons. Really, if I were more silly than I am, I might imagine myself a finished artist; but I feel daily how much I have still to learn. Don't imagine that I am making a fortune: my carriage and my white gloves eat up most of the earnings. However, I am a revolutionary, and so don't care for money.' Clearly, we are some way from the timid, apprehensive stranger, doubtful of his direction, uncertain of his future, who entered Paris a year before, with his country's sorrow still heavy upon his heart.

This fresh impulse of activity bore ample fruit, also, in composition. During the winter of 1832 were published the first two sets of Mazurkas; next year followed the first three Nocturnes, the first set of *Études*,² and the Variations on Herold's *Je vends des Scapulaires*, graceful embroideries of an exceedingly poor texture: while in 1834 came three more Nocturnes, another set of Mazurkas, a *Grande Valse Brillante* (Op. 18), and a Bolero. Besides these, Chopin arranged with Schlesinger for the publication of some of his existing manuscripts: the Pianoforte Trio, the Concerto in E minor, the Fantasia on Polish Airs, and the Krakowiak. Their success was almost

¹ Letter to Dziewanowski (abridged), Jan. 1833.

² Chopin had certainly composed some of these before his arrival in Paris.

instantaneous. No doubt there were a few dissentient voices: Field, the great burly Englishman laid aside his pipe to growl out that his new rival had '*un talent de chambre de malade*:' Rellstab, the editor of the Berlin *Iris*, practised a few of the vitriolic epigrams which he was afterwards going to launch at Schumann: but beyond these there was very little doubt expressed by any musician who read the works, and none at all by any who heard their composer play them.

In the spring of 1834, Chopin took a holiday and went off with Hiller to attend the Niederrheinische Musikfest at Aix-la-Chapelle. We have a very pleasant account of this expedition: the two friends met Mendelssohn, shared a box with him, and returned, after the Festival, to his new home in Dusseldorf, where they drank coffee and played skittles, and banqueted on music to their hearts' content. There is a characteristic picture, too, of an evening at Schadow's: the room full of eager, talkative art students, Hiller and Mendelssohn occasionally quieting the hubbub with a Fantasia or a Capriccio, Chopin sitting silent and unknown in a remote corner until he was forced to 'drop his disguise' and take his place at the piano. 'After that,' says Hiller, 'they looked at him with altogether different eyes.'

Back in Paris, he resumed his teaching, and completed his second set of *Études*, published later as Op. 25. During the winter season he appeared four times in public, once for Berlioz at the Conservatoire, twice in Pleyel's rooms, and once at a great charity concert in the Italian Opera-house. But it is clear that he was growing disinclined to face what he

calls the 'intimidation' of the crowd. He rarely did himself full justice on the platform: he was at his happiest in some friend's room, where he could pour out his fancies to the dim twilight, and forget the few motionless figures that were listening at his side. 'More than three,' said Charles Lamb, 'and it degenerates into an audience.' Chopin was more liberal in fixing his limit, but he understood the degeneration. All the best accounts which we have received of his playing come from those who heard him *en petit comité*—Heine, George Sand, Delacroix—and it is significant that, after his appearance at the Théâtre Italien, he allowed nearly four years to pass before emerging again from his seclusion. It does not appear that this distaste for the multitude in any way embittered him. It is an excess of eloquence to describe his preference for the drawing-room as 'a malignant cancer,' which 'cruelly tortured and slowly consumed his life.'¹ He was in no lack of money, or of friends, or of reputation, and he was the last man in the world to—

Beg of Hob and Dick
Their needless vouches,

or trouble himself because some upstart tribune could surpass him in popularity.

In the summer and autumn of 1835, Chopin left Paris for a more extended tour. He began with Carlsbad, where his father was staying under doctor's orders, and after a short stay there proceeded to Dresden, where he met his old schoolfellows the Wodzinskis, and took the opportunity to fall in love with their sister Marie. We have very little certain

¹ Professor Niecks' *Chopin*, Vol. i. p. 284.

knowledge about this new romance. There were a few pleasant days together, a Valse,¹ improvised at the moment of parting, and sent afterwards from Paris, 'pour Mademoiselle Marie,' and a later interview at Marienbad in 1836, where, we are told, Chopin offered marriage and was refused. But it seems clear that he only saw her upon these two occasions, and that his rejection, if it ever occurred, produced no very serious effect on his spirits. There were a great many harmless flirtations during his Paris life: flowers that sprang up in a light soil and withered under the next day's sun, and it is possible that this was only a growth of the same garden, somewhat deeper in root, and somewhat more ample in blossom. After all, Chopin was little more than a boy,—Polish, artistic, impressionable, fond by preference of the society of women: it is no matter for surprise if, in the intervals of being the Shelley of music, he found some pleasure in posing as its Tom Moore.

From Dresden he went on to Leipsic, and there made the acquaintance of Schumann and the Wiecks. It was nothing less than a meeting of the Davidsbund: Florestan, Chiarina and Félix Meritis gathered round him at the piano, while old Master Raro, who was in a bad temper that afternoon, stood in the next room, with the door ajar, and listened to the party which he would not compromise his dignity by joining. Mendelssohn proved the most congenial of companions, Schumann the kindest and most appreciative of critics, and Clara Wieck, then a girl of sixteen, convinced her sceptical visitor that there was at least 'one lady in Germany who could play his compositions.' The visit was all too short, but

¹ Valse in A flat, Op. 69, No. 1.

pupils were clamouring at home, publishers had received nothing all the year except the Scherzo in B minor, and the rent of rooms in the Chaussée d'Antin was a good deal higher than that in the Boulevard Poissonnière. So Chopin had to bring his holiday to a close, and to return to Paris with a store of new memories and a consciousness of new triumphs.

The chief incidents of 1836 were a couple of flying visits: one to London in July, one to Marienbad and Leipsic in September. The import of the latter has already been noted; at the former, Chopin was introduced to the Broadwoods as M. Fritz, and, as usual, threw off his incognito at the first touch of the pianoforte. During this year his health, which had hitherto been good, gave way under an attack of influenza, which was followed by a second early in 1837. But, in spite of illness, he contrived to get through plenty of work, and his list of publications for the year is unusually large: the F minor Concerto in April, the G minor Ballade in June, the Andante Spianato and Polonaise in July, followed in the same month by the two Polonaises, Op. 26, and the two Nocturnes, Op. 37. No doubt many of these were of earlier composition, but it must be remembered that to Chopin it was not the inception of a work which was laborious. Melodies came to him as easily as to Mozart; it was after they had been brought to birth that the toil began; anxious elaboration of phrase, hesitating selection of alternatives; here a cadence to be re-written, there a harmony to be rearranged; often a whole round of changes rung, only that the passage might return, after all, to its original form. In the whole process of production, the part which

seems to have given him most trouble was the clerk's work of correcting the proof-sheets. No composer, except Schumann, has left us so many conjectural readings; no composer, without exception, has allowed so many misprints to pass unnoticed. It is a curious, though not an inexplicable paradox that the conscientiousness with which he revised his manuscripts should have brought a reaction of indifference to the printed page. He took so long making up his mind that when he had once arrived at a decision he accepted it as the end of his responsibilities.

It was in 1837 that he met the woman whose influence over his life has been so fiercely attacked and so deplorably misunderstood. His biographers, indeed, in their treatment of George Sand, cannot easily be acquitted of some recklessness of statement and some unjustifiable licence of language. It is no light matter to bring grave charges on evidence avowedly imperfect, to give currency to idle rumour and malicious innuendo, to aid in casting unjust aspersions on the memory of a noble name. It is no light matter that these calumnies, many of which are as far below the level of quotation as they are beyond the possibility of belief, should be employed to barb some flip-pant epigram or envenom some sneering comment. Words which had their origin in the unscrupulous heat of political controversy¹ have been accepted as the cool and deliberate utterances of reason and judgment. The distortions of a false and cruel romance have been reproduced as if they contained testimony, not, indeed, final, but worthy of serious regard. In the imperfection of the record opportunity has

¹ See the pamphlet entitled *Une Contemporaine*, published during the Revolution of 1848.

been found for discreditable conjectures, for baseless imputations of motive, and for an ultimate decision which betrays itself by its eagerness to condemn.

It must be said at the outset that the record is manifestly imperfect. All the letters which Chopin wrote from Paris to his parents have disappeared, burned during a popular outburst at Warsaw in 1863. The loss of these documents is, of course, beyond calculation. It is true that M. Karasowski, the only one of Chopin's biographers who ever saw them, declares that they threw little or no light upon the matter;¹ it is also true that Chopin was a bad correspondent, with odd fits of intermission and reticence; but, at the same time, it is impossible to help feeling that we have to hear the cause after the principal plea has been withdrawn. We are therefore dependent partly on the accounts which have been left us by George Sand herself, partly on the testimony of third persons; and it is needless to add that, before accepting any statement, we must satisfy ourselves as to the credibility of the witness. *Ex parte* assertions, on whatever side they are adduced, can only be regarded as valuable in so far as they conform to the ordinary laws of evidence.

First, then, as to George Sand's character. Here we have, fortunately, a complete consensus on the part of those writers to whose name and authority the greatest weight can be attached. Matthew Arnold describes her as 'that great soul, simple, affectionate, without vanity, without pedantry, human, equitable, patient, kind,' and pours a full measure of scorn on those 'who have degraded her cry for love into the

¹ Karasowski, Vol. ii. p. 327.

cravings of a sensual passion.’¹ Sainte-Beuve knew her intimately for thirty years, and this is the way in which he writes about her:—‘Elle est femme, et très femme, mais elle n’a rien des petites gens du sexe, ni des ruses, ni des arrière-pensées : elle aime les horizons larges et vastes, et c’est là qu’elle va d’abord : elle s’inquiète du bien de tous, de l’amélioration du monde, ce qui est au moins le plus noble mal des âmes et la plus généreuse manie.’² Delacroix bears eloquent witness to her devotion and unselfishness :³ Heine almost forgets to mock as he bows before the woman ‘whose every thought is fragrant’:⁴ Mrs Browning, the purest and most spiritual of idealists, bent to kiss her hand at the first interview, and speaks of her throughout with sisterly affection and sympathy.⁵ And all this testimony is as nothing when compared with that of her own writings. Grant that her earlier novels contain a note of revolt, that her generous and enthusiastic temper led her for a time into the error of Saint-Simonism : it is yet certain that she believed herself to be writing in defence of Religion and humanity against a decadent Church and a maladministered government. And it is impossible to read her autobiography, and still more her letters, without the conviction that she was a good as well as a great woman, lacking, perhaps, in reticence and self-restraint, too frank of speech in face

¹ George Sand, by Matthew Arnold. *Fortnightly Review*, June 1877.

² Sainte-Beuve. *Portraits Contemporains*, i. 523.

³ Letter to Pierret, June 22, 1842.

⁴ ‘Alles was sie fühlt und denkt haucht Tiefsinn und Anmuth.’ Heine, *Lutetia*, ‘George Sand.’

⁵ See the letters of Feb. 15 and Ap. 7, 1852, quoted in Mrs Sutherland Orr’s *Life of Robert Browning*.

of oppression and wrong, but wholly devoid of any taint of luxury, wholly free from the meaner passions, wholly intent on helping all who needed her counsel or assistance. The truthfulness of the *Histoire de ma Vie* is attested in plain words by no less an authority than M. Edmond de Goncourt,¹ whose verdict in the matter will probably be accepted as conclusive. The truthfulness of the letters will be evident to anyone who takes the trouble to compare them with one another, and with the independent record of the period which they embrace. In one word, the intrinsic probability of George Sand's account is at least sufficient to throw the *onus probandi* upon her adversaries.

And when we turn to the other side, we are at once struck with a want of definite aim in the attack. Animated with the belief that Chopin was ill-used, impelled by a not unnatural desire to protect him at all hazards, his biographers have accredited George Sand with the incongruous vices of antagonistic temperaments, and have given us a picture, not of a bad woman, but of an impossible monster. Again, there are some charges which, in themselves, it is of no moment to prefer. It would be merely idle to accuse St Louis of atheism, or Bayard of treachery. It would be a waste of effort to call Nelson a coward, or Latimer an apostate. And equally, when one of our authors affirms that George Sand 'was never at a loss to justify any act, be it ever so cruel and abject,'² we can only condole with him on having selected, out of all existing adjectives, the two most entirely inapplicable to the character of which he

¹ *Journal*, Vol. iii. p. 242 (Dec. 1, 1868).

² Professor Niecks' *Chopin*, Vol. ii. p. 197.

treats. For the grosser accusations, the best answer is silence. They are no more worth denying than the calumnies of 'Lui et Elle': indeed, like that 'abominable book,'¹ they stand self-refuted. It is only a matter for regret that they have ever been allowed to emerge from their obscurity, and to darken, even for a moment, the intercourse of two noble lives.

From a misunderstanding of George Sand's character, there is but a short step to a misjudgment of her connection with Chopin. It has been represented as a *liaison* in our vulgarised English sense of the term: it was in reality a pure and cordial friendship, into which there entered no element of shame and no taint of degradation. Its closest parallel may be found in the relation between Teresa Malvezzi and Leopardi, a relation only to be questioned by those who hold that a sweet and gracious comradeship of man and woman is an impossibility. She was the older in years, she was far the older in character: her feeling for Chopin is well expressed in her own phrase as '*une sorte d'affection maternelle*': for ten years she encouraged him in his work, tended him in his sickness, offered him welcome in his holiday: and when at last the rupture came, it was brought about against her will, and maintained, by unforeseen accidents, against her expectation. In short, to describe Chopin as her 'discarded lover' is to make two mistakes of fact in two words.

At first, it is true, they saw but little of each other. For one reason, the fastidious artist was somewhat

¹ See the Essay on George Sand, in Mr Henry James' *French Poets and Novelists*.

repelled by the unconventionality of George Sand's surroundings ; for a second, they were both busy—he with his pupils, she with her books and with the education of her daughter, Solange. However, it is probable that, in 1837, he formed one of the usual summer party at Nohant, and that he forgot his unreasoning dislike in the kindness and hospitality which filled that most delightful of châteaux. During the winter he was occupied with fresh publications—the second Scherzo, the Impromptu in A flat, and some smaller pieces—and then came a third attack of influenza, which for a time rendered all further work impracticable. In February 1838, he was well enough to accept an invitation to Court ; next month he had so far recovered as to play in a concert at Rouen : but during the spring his illness returned in the form of a serious bronchial affection, and the doctor, whom he called in for consultation, peremptorily ordered him abroad.

It happened that George Sand was also contemplating a visit to the South of Europe. Her son Maurice, was suffering from rheumatism : she thought it advisable to save him from the risks of a Parisian December : after some debate, she decided to try Majorca, of which her friend Count Valdemosa had given her an enthusiastic description. Chopin, who was her guest during part of the summer, heard the plan discussed, and, feeling somewhat disheartened at the prospects of a lonely voyage, asked leave to make one of the party. His proposal was accepted with frank good-nature ; and, after a few weeks of hesitation and uncertainty, he followed the Sands to Perpignan, crossed with them to Barcelona, and proceeded first to Palma, and then to a little up-country villa,

where they hoped to establish themselves for the winter.

Never, since the days of the Ten Thousand, was there a more disastrous expedition. No doubt the scenery was magnificent enough to justify all Count Valdemosa's patriotism, but it was compensated by every form of *petite misère* which a malicious destiny could devise. The house was draughty and ill-constructed; the food was detestable; the peasants were ignorant, superstitious savages, to whom, as to most barbarians, stranger was synonymous with enemy. Chopin's failure to attend Mass on the first Sunday exposed him to the gravest suspicion; and when it was rumoured that his absence was due to ill-health, suspicion ripened into the hostility of panic terror. It became difficult to procure the necessaries of life; it became almost impossible to obtain any service or neighbourly assistance; the whole countryside passed sentence of outlawry upon the newcomers; and as climax of inhospitality, the landlord heard that one of his tenants was consumptive, and immediately turned the whole party out of doors.

All this was bad enough, but it would have been tolerable if only the climate had remained propitious. Unfortunately, after a fortnight's delusive sunshine, the winter broke into a passion of wind and rain. The woods stood dripping and shivering; the mountain roads turned into impassable torrents; and the exiles, driven for shelter to the cells of a disused monastery, found their days heavy with imprisonment, and their nights ghostly with the voices of the storm. It is not surprising that Chopin's nerve began to give way. His material privations he could bear with some fortitude, but he was powerless to

banish the vague, nameless apprehensions which spoke in every echo, and haunted every shadowy corner. It required all George Sand's courage and devotion to render his life endurable. It was in her strength that his weakness found support; it was her sympathy and kindness that soothed him, as a mother soothes a sick child. On her, indeed, devolved the whole administration of the household. Overwhelmed as she was with literary work, she yet found time to teach her children, to tend her patients, to clothe empty rooms and bleak walls with some appearance of warmth and comfort. She was never weary, never despondent, never out of humour, and whatever of brightness came to lighten those wintry days of stress and hardship was but the reflection of her unclouded serenity.

During these fluctuations of fear and solace, of convalescence and relapse, Chopin can hardly have completed any work of importance. The Preludes, which are sometimes referred to his sojourn in Majorca, seem to have been composed before he left Paris; and as they are the only publications of the year 1839, we may reasonably conclude that there was nothing else ready. It is possible that one or two of them may have been written at Valdemosa, whence also may have come the inception of the Ballade in F major, the two Polonaises, Op. 40, and the Funeral March Sonata. But none of these look like productions of the sick-room; and it is clear that, as the winter advanced, Chopin grew less and less capable of any sustained effort. Unmistakable symptoms of consumption made their appearance; the local doctors proved wholly incompetent to deal with the case; at last, it became only a question of waiting

until the season was warm enough for a journey home. At the end of February, Chopin nerved himself to face the fatigue of travel, and returned to the shores of France in desperate search of the health, for lack of which he had left them.

At Marseilles he stayed for nearly three months,¹ under charge of Dr Cauvière, who, without concealing the gravity of the disease, told his patient that, with proper care, he might yet count on many years of life and work. There can be no doubt that Chopin's death-warrant had been signed, but it is equally sure that his sentence was one which could allow a long respite, and encourage the continued hope of deferment. Every man stands liable to an unread mandate of execution. Every man goes through the world, like Hernani, waiting for the summons of the fatal horn. Life, in all true reckoning, is counted not by years but by actions; and it is better to lavish the few decades of Schubert or Mozart than to hoard a long, inglorious cycle that has outworn its hopes and outlived its memories. No career is unhappy, however brief it be, that does not fail of its purpose.

And of failure in any form Chopin had unusually little experience. Even at this dark time we hear of rapid recovery, of regained strength and courage, of a summer filled with pleasant days and noble achievement. The cloud of trouble, which had hung over the forests of Valdemosa, lay far removed from the smooth lawns and sunny glades of Nohant; and there, amid music and children's laughter, and a concourse of friendly faces, the winter of discontent was very speedily forgotten. For the next few years,

¹ There was a short visit to Genoa in the early part of May.

with the exception of 1840, he made a practice of spending his summer vacation at the château. Life looked more simple in the light of George Sand's simplicity and goodness ; beneath her example it was easy to disregard all personal anxieties, and to turn with fresh resolution to the service of Art. Besides, under that hospitable roof, there were always other comrades to share the welcome. At one time Liszt would come, radiant with the triumphs of his last European tour ; at another, Mickiewicz, ablaze with some fresh project of social regeneration ; at another, Delacroix, busy with his *St Anne* ; or Louis Blanc, intent on a new chapter of his History. Over the whole house was spread a clear, wholesome atmosphere of work, braced with a high seriousness of aim, and made genial with kindly aid and brilliant converse. We may well believe the statement of George Sand that Chopin always wrote his best at Nohant.

For some part of every winter, too, they were near neighbours in Paris. At first they occupied two adjoining houses in the Rue Pigalle ; later they moved to the Cour d'Orléans, where Chopin took No. 3 on one side of the court ; George Sand No. 5 on the other ; and their friend Madame Marliani completed the phalanstery by installing herself between them. Here was established that famous *salon*, the memory of which recalls the better days of the Hôtel Rambouillet. Indeed, though some few names of the classic age are unsurpassed, at no time could Catherine de Vivonne have gathered so notable an assemblage of talent as that which thronged the rooms of the new Arthenice. Chapelain, Godeau, Voiture, the Scudérys, even Boileau himself are but

dim and uncertain lights beside Dumas and Balzac, Gautier and Heine, Lamennais and Arago and Sainte-Beuve. Here was something better than madrigals and anagrams and the *carte du tendre*; something which helped to mould the life of a nation, and bore its effect on the whole course of European thought. It was amid these surroundings—now at Paris, now at Nohant—that Chopin lived and worked, stimulated by all that was best in contemporary art, encouraged by the sympathy of his peers and the cordial admiration of his listeners.

Unlike most musicians, Chopin was fond of teaching, and was almost uniformly popular as a master. It is hard to understand how his finely-strung temperament could have endured the strain and irritation of pianoforte lessons, but we have abundant testimony as to the gentleness and tact with which he corrected errors or pointed out nuances of expression. Even on 'stormy days,' his anger was nothing more than a cry of physical pain, and he always softened at once if the culprit showed any symptoms of distress. When things went well, he was the most admirable of teachers; kindly alert, suggestive, often protracting the lesson for two or three hours, and sometimes closing it with the best of all rewards, an improvisation. The qualities which he regarded as paramount were delicacy of touch, intelligence of conception, purity of feeling: in his eyes the only sin worse than affectation was the correct mechanical dexterity that is too dull to be affected. Not, of course, that he undervalued accuracy; every student, however accomplished, had to begin with Clementi's *Gradus*, and to tread the whole course of studies and exercises; but he was far too great an artist

to see any finality in a mere Academic precision. 'Mettez y donc toute votre âme' was his injunction; and in all education there is no better rule.

Yet it is curious that not one of his pupils has succeeded in making a name of European mark. Filtsch might have done so had not death cut short his career in the early promise of boyhood, but to the rest—Gutmann, Lysberg, Mikuli, Tellefsen—the record of public favour has been singularly indifferent. No doubt many members of his school were amateurs, who, with all their training, never entered the arena: some, like George Mathias, were satisfied to embody in their own teaching the traditions of their master's method; but when all allowances have been granted, it still remains true that Chopin never communicated his secret. Perhaps his secret was incommunicable; perhaps, like his style in composition, it was not so much a method as a manner; something too intimate and personal to be expressed in the concrete language of principle and formula. We know that in later years he began a systematic treatise on the pianoforte, but we may guess that it was not ill-health alone which led him to destroy it unfinished.

The recovery of new vigour and new interests brought him back once more to the uncongenial atmosphere of the concert-room. In the winter of 1839, he played for a second time at the Tuilleries; in 1841 and 1842, he appeared twice in Pleyel's rooms, where he presented some of his own most recent compositions to an audience mainly consisting of friends and pupils. And if his activity as a pianist was rare and intermittent, he made up for the deficiency by the number and importance of his

published works. The Sonata in B flat minor was printed in May 1840, and then followed a long series of Scherzos and Ballades, of Nocturnes and Impromptus, of Waltzes, Polonaises, and Mazurkas, many of them incontestable masterpieces, all of them valuable contributions to the literature of Music. If we except the Studies and the Preludes, there is nothing in the whole of Chopin's previous production that may hold comparison with the harvest of these abundant years.

Meantime, his health was varying with an almost mercurial instability. On his better days he would be buoyant, gay, even extravagant, playing fantastic tricks at the pianoforte, or mimicking his rivals with inimitable skill and good-natured satire: on his worse he would appear peevish and fretful, not from ill-humour, but from sheer exaggeration of sensibility. To his present mood there was no such thing as a trifle. He broke into fierce anger at a stupid joke of Meyerbeer's, which a moment's thought would have allowed him to disregard. He quarrelled permanently and irrevocably with Liszt over some trivial slight which would never have ruffled the composure of a healthier mind. Like many men of impulsive and nervous temper, Chopin could only half forgive. George Sand says of him, finely and truly, that 'he had no hatreds;' but he equally lacked that broad humane sense of pardon which obliterates the fault as the tide obliterates a footprint upon the shore. If he once felt himself wounded, he could wish no ill to his adversary, but the scar remained.

At the beginning of May 1844, he was prostrated by the sudden news of his father's death. The shock, falling unexpectedly upon an enfeebled frame, was

too heavy for him to resist, and during a long anxious fortnight he lay seriously, even dangerously ill. George Sand, with ready sympathy, at once came to the rescue. She wrote his letters to his mother. She summoned one of his sisters from Warsaw. She left her work to watch by his sickbed, nursed him with maternal solicitude, and at the first sign of recovery carried him off to Nohant for convalescence. There he seems once more to have restored to equilibrium the delicate balance of his life. His correspondence with Franchomme catches something of its old lightness of tone; he discusses, with evident interest, the fortunes of his manuscripts and the prospects of his coming work: best of all, he returns to his piano, and at last charms his sorrow asleep. The next two years passed so quietly and uneventfully that they have left hardly any mark on the course of his career. In 1845 he published the *Berceuse* and the *Sonata in B minor*, in 1846 the *Barcarolle*, the *Polonaise-Fantasia*, and a few *Mazurkas* and *Nocturnes*; but even in his art the record is meagre, and in his life it is almost non-existent. We have half-a-dozen unimportant letters, we have half-a-dozen lines of anecdote or conjecture, and the rest is silence. It was the dead, heavy, ominous stillness which precedes a storm.

In 1847 the storm broke, shattering in its fall the closest and most intimate of Chopin's friendships. Its occasion was a quarrel with Maurice Sand, the causes of which, though they are nowhere explicitly related, are by no means difficult to divine. A short time before, George Sand had adopted a distant cousin called Augustine Brault, a quiet, colourless, inoffensive girl, whom she had rescued from the

influences of a bad home.¹ Maurice was fond of his cousin; indeed, idle report accredited him with a deeper feeling: Chopin disliked her, and rather resented her appearance as an intrusion. Again, in May 1847, occurred the marriage of Solange Sand with M. Clesinger, a marriage of which, at the time, Chopin alone disapproved. Given Maurice's impetuous character and Chopin's nervous irritability, the matter needs no more recondite explanation. We can well imagine the words of pointed criticism and disdainful rejoinder, the interchange of sharp retorts, the gradual development of a contention which, as we know, culminated in Maurice's threat to leave his home. George Sand tried to make peace: Chopin, barely recovered from a new attack of illness,² regarded her interference as an act of hostility: and after a few words of bitter reproach, 'the first,' she says, 'which he ever offered me,' he turned and left her in open anger. It is easy to bring charges of ingratitude, of fickleness, of help forgotten and services ill requited. We are more concerned to note that a rage so sudden and implacable can be traced to no other than a physical origin. Chopin's condition was still serious enough to cause grave anxiety, and his outburst of petulance was not an aggression of deliberate unkindness, but a half-conscious aberration of disease. George Sand herself had no thought that the breach was permanent. Early in 1848 she voluntarily sought a reconciliation, and when the attempt failed—for busy tongues had been at work

¹ M. Brault's character can best be gauged from his pamphlet, *Une Contemporaine*. See also the *Histoire de ma vie*, and George Sand's letter of Aug. 9.

² See George Sand's letter to Gutmann, May 12.

in the meantime—she bore her trouble without a word of complaint or a thought of rancour. Years afterwards she could write of Chopin, ‘He was always the same to me.’

Such is the simplest and most credible version of the story. It offends against no inductions, it violates no probabilities, it is supported by the plain statement of the only authority who had first-hand knowledge, as well as by circumstantial evidence from outside. Of the two other accounts, the more serious and important is that of M. Karasowski. M. Franchomme, who begins by accusing George Sand of literal assault and battery,¹ may, perhaps, be disregarded in spite of the uncertainty of Professor Niecks. But the attack on *Lucrezia Floriani* involves such grave issues, and contains such perilous half-truths, that it merits some detailed consideration. We must remember that there are two separate points at stake: first, whether the novel had any share in bringing about the rupture; second, whether it was or was not unjustifiable.

To both these questions M. Karasowski returns answer in the affirmative. George Sand, he tells us, finding it impossible to effect a separation by cold looks and petty slights, ‘resorted to the heroic expedient’ of caricaturing Chopin in a romance. The portrait of Prince Karol was drawn by her with the deliberate intent to wound, with the desire of forcing a quarrel upon the lover whose fidelity had outlasted her own. Let the reader consider this charge for a

¹ ‘George Sand was a woman with a woman’s ideal of gentleness, of the “charm of good manners” as essential to civilisation.’—Matthew Arnold, *Fortnightly Review*, June 1877. See Professor Niecks’ *Chopin*, Vol. ii. p. 200.

moment. Here is a sick man, near to death, weak, helpless, sensitive to the least injury, and we are asked to believe that the woman who has held unbroken friendship with him for ten years, the woman whose generosity and compassion are admitted even by her enemies, has taken the opportunity to stab him with a poisoned weapon. The crime is so base, so wanton, so far removed not only from George Sand's character, but from the common level of sane humanity, that we should require the strongest testimony before we could believe it possible. Until it be proved, we have only one view upon the case—*reclamat istiusmodi suspicionibus ipsa natura*.

Fortunately, on the first point we have the clear evidence of fact. *Lucrezia Floriani* was written during the winter of 1846, and was read by Chopin, chapter after chapter, as it proceeded. If, then, Chopin had taken offence at the book, the rupture would have occurred, as M. Karasowski positively declares that it did, 'in the beginning of 1847.' This is certainly not the case. Chopin, who spent the spring at Paris, was in friendly correspondence with George Sand in May,¹ and either paid, or at least projected, his usual visit to Nohant in the summer.² It is not credible that he, of all men, would have offered himself as a guest to the woman whom he believed to have held him up to ridicule. Add to this George Sand's poignant distress at the estrangement; add her categorical denial of the charge of portraiture; add the fact that there is a perfectly simple explanation outside of the whole matter, and

¹ See George Sand's letter to Gutmann, May 12, 1847.

² Liszt declares that the rupture took place at Nohant. If so, this alternative is settled.

this side of the case may be regarded as closed. Whatever may be said about the merits of *Lucrezia Floriani*, two things are certain—one that it was not intended by George Sand as a cause of quarrel, the other that it was not so accepted at the time by Chopin. Grant that, at a later period, his friends persuaded him of a resemblance, which, but for them, he would never have imagined. They knew that he had broken with George Sand; they took his side with a natural partisanship; the weapon lay ready to their grasp; without further thought or consideration they put it in employment. There are some minds which always look for the 'originals' in a work of fiction. Any chance trick of manner or turn of phrase is sufficient for recognition—Numa Roumestan is Gambetta, Harold Skimpole is Leigh Hunt, Falstaff is Sir John Oldcastle, and the rest of it. The scandal is easily set afloat, and no man ever listens to a contradiction.

This brings us to the second point. Is Prince Karol a portrait of Chopin? and is his relation with Lucrezia a description of the ten-years' friendship? To answer these questions in the negative, it is only necessary to read the novel. Prince Karol is an idle, disconsolate dreamer, and his story a tedious analysis of the more unamiable aspect of passion. Their points of resemblance with their supposed prototypes are exhausted in a few superficial accidents; in their essential qualities they are far removed. Where is Chopin's humour, or his buoyancy, or his generosity, or his genius? Where is the life of work which it was the function of friendship to solace and encourage? The whole book is one discordant love-duet, full of recriminations and complaints, of selfish

affection and suspicion and jealousy. Nothing could be more unlike the phalanstery of the Cour d'Orléans, or the frank, free comradeship of Nohant. And more, it is notorious that in all George Sand's novels there is no real characterisation, much less its attendant vice of portraiture. 'The artistic weakness of Madame Sand,' says Mr Henry James, 'is that she never described the actual.' Here, then, as elsewhere, Chopin's biographers are accusing her of the one fault which is diametrically opposite to her nature. So far from her characters being drawn from life, they were never even corrected by life. They breathe a romantic atmosphere of their own, now fresh with the purity of *La Petite Fadette*, now charged with the electric passion of *Valentine* or *Indiana*, but at no time identical with the warm vital air of true experience.

Here, then, the case may be summed up. The novel was not conceived with the intention of describing Chopin; the character of the hero is not Chopin's character; the story of the hero is not Chopin's story. At the time when the book was written, George Sand had no expectation of a quarrel with her friend; she had certainly no desire to provoke one. He, for his part, read the work through 'without the least inclination to deceive himself,' without umbrage, without suspicion. The estrangement, to whatever cause it was due, did not take place until after the interval of some months; and among all conflicting explanations, that of a breach with Maurice Sand is the most complete and the most probable. Surely, in the face of this evidence, it is not too much to ask that the accusation of portraiture be withdrawn.

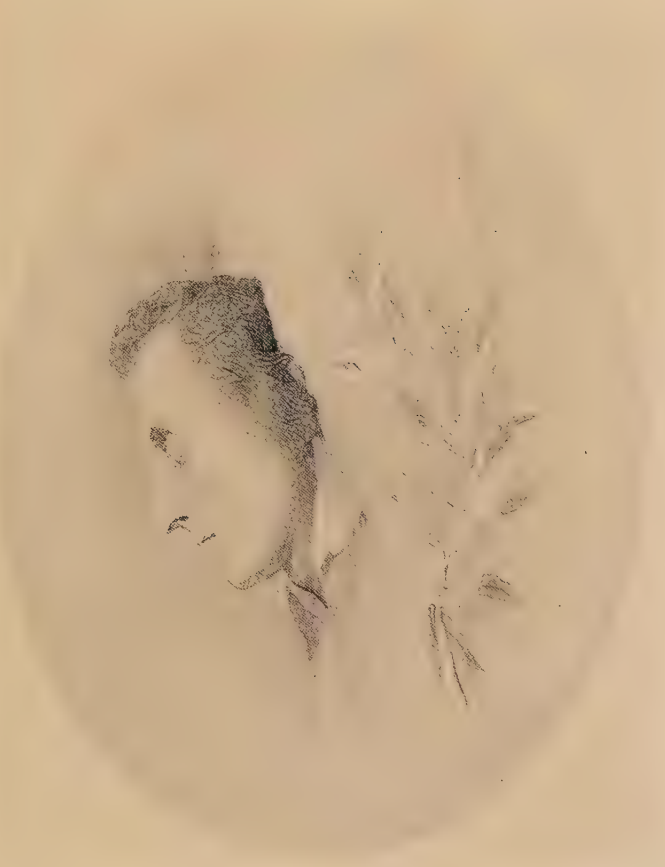
Another winter of illness and inaction filled the

measure of Chopin's trouble with the further anxiety of straitened means. In February 1848, he was forced by sheer poverty to drag himself from his lodging, and endure once more the labour and fatigue of a concert. It is worth noting that he had at the time a score of manuscripts, the sale of which would have relieved him: but they fell below his standard of self-criticism, and he chose rather to sacrifice his inclination than to offer to the world any work which he regarded as unworthy of his powers. Possibly he looked upon his recent Violoncello Sonata as the beginning of the end: in any case, he held his hand for the future, and allowed no other of his compositions to be published. There is a real heroism in this determination to give only of his best. We might well have forgiven him if he had yielded to pressing need, and taken the readiest means of evading an ordeal which, even in his days of health, he had always feared and detested. But, from first to last, his artistic career was singularly free from any taint of money-worship. The generosity, which had so often aided poor dependents or exiled compatriots, found its complement in a pride that would buy neither ease nor comfort at the cost of reputation.

In the latter part of February came the outbreak of the revolution, and Chopin's further stay in Paris was rendered impossible. At no time could he have heard the presage of war with the enthusiasm of Wagner or the carelessness of Haydn: in his present state of infirmity and depression it would have been mere madness to remain. He therefore accepted a cordial invitation to England, crossed the channel with his pupil Tellefsen for companion, and, about the end of April, established himself in London, where he was

soon surrounded with all the help which kindness and sympathy can bestow. His visit to this country, which was of little less than a year's duration, seems at first to have been beneficial to him. His rooms in Dover Street were crowded with visitors, his days 'passed,' as he says, 'like lightning;' he was even persuaded to leave his retirement and give two recitals at the house of his friend Mrs Sartoris. From August to October he travelled northward, giving concerts at Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and enjoying with evident pleasure the hospitality that met him at every stage. Yet even here we may notice a tone of weariness in his letters, a sense of effort, made rather to satisfy some external claim than to answer to any inward stimulus. Now and again he can shake it off, and write with something of his old buoyancy of spirits; then the burden returns, heavy with a weight of listless indifference, or with a galling load of pain. And at the approach of November there came an ominous change for the worse. The stress of the summer produced an inevitable reaction, the frail body sank back into weakness and suffering, the ebbing life throbbed every day with a fainter pulse. Through the winter months he lay tossing with impatience till he could regain strength enough to escape. London had become unbearable. 'Another day here,' he writes in January, 'and I shall go mad or die.' The whole mind is overstrung, jarred into discord at a touch, or relapsing, not into quietude, but into the silence of despair.

His friends carried him back to Paris, where he lingered in slow wasting disease until the autumn. A few days before his death, George Sand, whose



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daughter was among the watchers at his bedside, came to his lodging and asked to see him. We can well imagine the yearning anxiety with which she stood for a moment on the threshold of reconciliation, and the bitter disappointment when Gutmann closed the door and refused her admittance. He was afraid, he tells us, that Chopin was too weak to bear the agitation of such a meeting, that the memories of past friendship and past estrangement were too heavily fraught with peril to be recalled.¹ It may be that the decision was right, and yet Chopin spoke of her and wondered at her absence. The fire of life is sacred in its lowest embers, yet a breath of love might have fanned them into a purer flame. In all Chopin's story, there is nothing more pathetic than the narrow chasm which kept asunder two severed hearts at the very point of union.

On the morning of October 17, it was known that the end had come. The tidings, though they could hardly have been unexpected, were heard through the length and breadth of Paris with the greatest regret and consternation. Everyone who had known Chopin felt his death as a personal sorrow; one had been honoured by his friendship, another enriched by his bounty, another gladdened by some kind word or some pleasant greeting; there was no chance acquaintance but had felt his ray of reflection from the master's life. For the rest, the whole world was poorer for the loss of a genius, whose bare forty years of time had sufficed to create a new musical language, and uphold a new idea of art. All preparations were made to celebrate the funeral with befitting pomp. At the Madeleine Mozart's *Requiem*

¹ See Professor Niecks' *Chopin*, Vol. ii. p. 318.

was sung over the bier, the procession was joined by almost every man of note in Paris, and at Père la Chaise, the coffin, covered with flowers and sprinkled with Polish earth, was laid in a place of honour among the great French musicians. The country of his adoption had cherished the exile in his life; in his death, it was her privilege to show him honour.

III

A LYRIC POET

IT is intelligible that any attempt to explain the charm of Chopin's music should provoke some attitude of impatience and revolt. His spirit, we may be told, is too volatile for our clumsy alembics, too intangible for our concrete methods of investigation ; it eludes our glance, it vanishes at our touch, it mocks with a foregone failure all our efforts at description or analysis. The lyric gift, indeed, has always been allowed a special immunity from criticism. In the larger fields of epic and drama, the poet turns more directly to ourselves : he bids us approach, he confers with us, he interprets for our hearing some great truth of humanity, or some wise and searching judgment of life. But the lyric poet stands apart, careless of our presence, oblivious of our attention, pouring out his heart in a transport of purely personal joy or sorrow, singing because he must, and not because there are any to listen. Of his voice we may say, in the truest sense of the phrase, that it is 'not heard but overheard.' Of his thought we may say, with most justification, that it is self-centred, individual, characteristic. And hence, in estimating him, it would seem that we are confronted by a natural dilemma. Either we sympathise with his mood, and therefore approve, or

we fail to sympathise, and therefore stand outside the limits of fair judgment.

Upon this conclusion there are two words of comment to offer. In the first place, the distinction itself is of far less importance in music than in poetry ; for music, as such, has no truth of life or nature to interpret. When we speak of a symphony as epic, we are merely using a convenient formula by which we may call attention to its breadth and scale ; we do not imply that it has any story to tell, or any record of events to communicate. When we call an overture 'Tragic,' we mean that it can evoke certain undefined impressions of gloom and grandeur ; we do not imply that it contains any outline of a plot or any suggestion of *dramatis personæ*. No doubt there are in music differences of style, consequent upon differences of dimension, just as in painting the manner of a fresco will differ from that of a miniature. But in spirit the whole art of music is equally subjective : equally intent on expressing, through a medium of beautiful sound, the psychological conditions of the composer. It stands in no direct relation to the external world ; it neither observes, nor depicts, nor criticises ; its entire function is the embodiment, so far as embodiment is possible, of an abstract idea. If, therefore, when we apply the name 'lyric' to a musician, we mean to lay stress on a certain quality of style, then we are using a term which does not preclude, but invite, the application of the critical faculty. If we mean by it a certain temper of mind, then the term ceases to be distinctive as among musicians, for it belongs to all alike.

In the second place, it is obvious that musical

criticism must attach itself primarily to questions of form. Grant that the art has room for certain spiritual distinctions, which bear some remote and shadowy resemblance to those of the great poets or of the great painters; grant that we can describe Schumann's prevailing tone as manly, or Mendelssohn's as tender; that we can notice a want of sternness in Spohr, and a want of reticence in Berlioz; yet such judgments as these are always liable to misuse, and, at best, are speedily exhausted. We cannot imagine ourselves asking of the musicians, as Matthew Arnold asks of the poets, whether their art contains an adequate criticism of life, whether it is marked by insight and benignity. We feel at once that such phrases are inapplicable to music, that they make it too articulate, too definite, too precise. Again, when we read such a line as—

In la sua voluntade è nostra pace,

there are two separate and distinct sources of our pleasure: first, the pure serenity of the thought; secondly, the liquid perfection of the verse. But when we turn to a melody of Beethoven, we find that here the two aspects are inseparable: that the verse is the thought, that the embodiment is the inspiration, and that it is virtually impossible to formulate any test of the one which is not at the same time a test of the other. The contrast will become still clearer if we take a poem in which the two qualities are not both present. The epilogue in Browning's *Asolando*, for example, can hardly be regarded as verse at all: but the uncouthness which deprives it of any claim to the title of a classic, is to most readers compensated by the spirit of sturdy

courage that animates it throughout. To this compensation there is no parallel in Music. We may sometimes condone a fault in a melody otherwise admirable—the second strain, for instance, in our ballad of ‘The Bailiff’s Daughter’—but in so doing we set one portion of the form against another; we do not set the form as a whole against some external counterpart. In short, whatever can be said as to the conditions of vitality in other arts, in Music, at least, it is true that a work is great in proportion as its form is perfect.

This perfection of form was Chopin’s ostensible ideal. No composer in the whole history of Music has laboured with a more earnest anxiety at accuracy of outline and artistic symmetry of detail. We have here ‘no clattering of dishes at a royal banquet,’ no casual indolence of accompaniment; no gap filled with unmeaning brilliance or idle commonplace: every effect is studied with deliberate purpose, and wrought to the highest degree of finish that it can bear. Of course, the thoughts were conceived spontaneously; no man could have written the poorest of Chopin’s works by rule and measure: but before they were deemed ready for presentation they were tried by every test, and confronted with every alternative which a scrupulous ingenuity could propose. It is no small commendation that workmanship so elaborate should be beyond the reach of any imitator. As a rule, it is the dashing, daring, impetuous pioneer in Art who distances all followers, and finds himself, he hardly knows how, on a height that they can never hope to attain: in this case the climber has planted every footstep with a careful circumspection, he has employed all his prudence, all his foresight, all

his certain command of resource, and yet, at the end of the ascent he stands alone. The reason for this is twofold : first, that Chopin's intuition of style was a natural gift which few other composers have possessed in an equal degree : second, that he brought to its cultivation not only an untiring diligence, but a delicacy of taste which is hardly ever at fault. His limitations are plain and unmistakable. For the larger types of the art, for the broad architectonic laws of structure on which they are based, he exhibited an almost total disregard. His works in 'Sonata form,' and in the forms cognate to the Sonata, are, with no exception, the failures of a genius that has altogether overstepped its bounds. Of Choral compositions, of Symphony, of Opera, he has not left us a single example. But when all this has been admitted, it still remains true that he is a great master, great in his exquisite sense of beauty, in his almost unerring skill, and in the deliberate and reasoned audacity with which he has extended the range of musical expression.

Like all modern composers of acknowledged rank, Chopin was strongly influenced by the popular music of his native country. As a child, he had been fond of collecting and studying the folk-songs which he heard at harvest field or market or village festival ; they supplied him with his first models, and in some cases with his first themes as well. In later life, their impression deepened rather than faded. He always thought of himself as a national poet : ' I should like,' he told Hiller, ' to be to my people what Uhland is to the Germans.' No doubt the external qualities of his music are entirely his own : the richness of harmony, the complexity of figure, the delicate elabora-

tion of ornament ; but the texture which these colour and adorn is essentially of native growth and native substance. In a word, he made precisely the right use of national materials, taking them as a basis, and developing them into fuller beauty by the force and brilliance of his own personal genius.

There are three chief ways in which this national influence affected his work. In the first place, the popular music of Poland, unlike that of Italy or Germany, is almost invariably founded on dance forms and dance rhythms. Its gifts to the art of Europe are the Polonaise, the Krakowiak, and the Mazurka : types which, however widely they may differ in grade of social acceptance, are all essentially Polish in history and character. The very ballads of the country have the same lilt and cadence ; they are primitive dances not yet differentiated from the use of words. They move with recurrent figure, with exact balance of melodic phrase, with that precise symmetry which is required by a ' Muse of the many-twinkling feet.' And it is hardly necessary to point out that in this respect Chopin is a true Pole. More than a quarter of his entire composition is devoted ostensibly to dance forms ; and throughout the rest of it their effect may be traced in a hundred phrases and episodes. Grant that his treatment of the rhythmic figures is very different from the simple *naïveté* of his models : we are here discussing not treatment but conception, and in conception his indebtedness to his country is incontestable. His Mazurkas, in short, bear somewhat the same relation to the tunes of the peasantry as the songs of Robert Burns to those of the forerunners whom he superseded.

A second point of resemblance is Chopin's habit of founding a whole paragraph either on a single phrase repeated in similar shapes, or on two phrases in alternation. By itself this practice is primitive almost to barbarism, and its employment in many of the Polish folk-songs is a serious depreciation of their artistic value. But when it is confined to an episodical passage, especially in a composition founded on a striking or important melody, it may serve as a very justifiable point of rest, a background of which the interest is purposely toned down to provide a more striking contrast with the central figure. Of its illegitimate use a noticeable example may be found in the 'Spring Song,' which, it must be remembered, Chopin never intended to publish: its true and right employment will be seen in many of the Mazurkas—such, for instance, as the first (in F sharp minor), the fifth (in B flat), and the thirty-seventh (in A flat), which is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all. In the longer works, which are the more varied in proportion to their greater scale, we should hardly expect to find examples of a mannerism which, by its very nature, stands at the opposite pole from variation: but its influence may be noticed in the short, clear-cut phrases and exact balance of such compositions as the Scherzo in C sharp minor. No doubt much of this exactitude is due to an intense desire for clearness and precision: yet none the less the particular way in which that desire is satisfied may be regarded as characteristic of the national manner. Beethoven does not attain the lucidity of his style by such close parallelism of phraseology.

Thirdly, Chopin was to some extent affected by the tonality of his native music. A large number

of the Polish folk-songs are written, not in our modern scale, but in one or other of the ecclesiastical modes: notably the Lydian, which has its fourth note a semitone sharper, and the Dorian, which has its third and seventh notes a semitone flatter than the major scale of Western Europe. Some, again, end on what we should call dominant harmony; a clear survival of the ecclesiastical distinction between plagal and authentic. Of this tonal system, some positive traces may be found in the Mazurkas, the cadences of the thirteenth, seventeenth and twenty-fifth, the frequent use of a sharpened subdominant, and the like; while on the negative side it may perhaps account for Chopin's indifference to the requirements of key-relationship. Not only in his efforts at Sonata form does he show himself usually unable to hold together a complex scheme of keys, but in works of a more loose structure his choice seems to be regulated rather by hazard than by any preconceived plan. Sometimes, as in the end of the F major Ballade, he deliberately strays away from a logical conclusion;¹ sometimes, as in the sixth Nocturne, he forces himself back with a sudden and inartistic violence; more often he allows his modulations to carry him where they will, and is so intent on perfecting each phrase and each melody that he has no regard left to bestow on the general principles of construction. No doubt some of this weakness was due to defective training, some, also, to the prevailing spirit and temper of the

¹ The Ballade, which originally ended in F major, was altered to its present conclusion by an afterthought. See the review of it in Schumann's *Collected Works*.

Romantic movement. But, in Chopin's case, there was a special reason beyond. As a Pole, he approached our western key system from the outside, and although he learned its language with wonderful skill and facility, he never wholly assimilated himself to the method of thought which it implies.

It is quite possible that, in any case, Chopin would have found himself incapable of dealing with large masses. The want of virility, which has already been noted in his character, appears beyond question in his music; leaving untouched all the grace and tenderness, all the rare and precious qualities of workmanship, but relaxing into an almost inevitable weakness at any crisis which demands sustained force or tenacity. When he is at his strongest, we miss that sense of reserve power, that quiet irresistible force, 'too full for sound or foam,' which characterises the dignity of the noblest art. He can be passionate, vehement, impetuous, but he expends himself in the effort. He can express agitation, challenge, defiance, but he lacks the royal magnanimity that will never stoop to defy. Even his melody is never sublime, never at the highest level. Its more serious mood stands to the great tunes of Beethoven as Leopardi stands to Dante, rising for a moment on a few perfect lines to follow the master's flight, and then sinking back to earth under some load of weariness or impatience.

Take, for instance, the B flat minor Sonata, in which Chopin most nearly approximates to the 'grand manner' of composition. The first movement, regarded by itself, is a masterpiece; its exposition clear and concise, its subjects well contrasted, one for thematic treatment and one for melody, its free

fantasia an admirable example of an established type, and its recapitulation, though a little too short for perfect balance, a firm and lucid statement which sums up its results without a bar of vagueness or uncertainty. Not less complete is the Scherzo, which develops the simple forms of Mozart and Beethoven without obscuring their outline, and, despite all its rush and vigour, never allows its themes to get out of hand or to pass beyond the legitimate bounds of control. But from this point the value of the Sonata steadily declines. Schumann undoubtedly hits the blot when he declares that the great Funeral March ought never to have formed part of the work at all. As a separate piece it is of incomparable beauty; as the adagio of this particular Sonata it is wholly out of place. Its key is ill selected in relation to the rest of the composition; its contrasts of theme bear too much resemblance to those of the first movement; worst of all, its form is precisely the same as that of the Scherzo; and these objections, not one of which affects the movement in itself, are no less than fatal to it in its present context. The Finale, again, has neither the breadth nor the dignity requisite for its position. Its structure, though perfectly clear, is too simple and primitive to justify it as the fitting conclusion of an important work; and its persistent rhythmic figure gives it somewhat the air of an impromptu. If we had found it in the Volume of *Preludes*, we should have felt for it nothing but admiration; here, its inadequacy is so obvious that the greater part of critical attention has been distracted from its undeniable merits. In short, the first half of the Sonata gives promise of a Classic

such as, with one exception, the world had not seen since the death of Beethoven; the second half, though almost every bar contains something that is beautiful, is a disappointment and a failure. Icarus has flown too near the sun, and the borrowed wings have no longer the strength to support him.

This want of manliness, moral and intellectual, marks the one great limitation of Chopin's province. It is, of course, wholly unreasonable to make it a subject of complaint; we might as well complain of Keats for not being Milton; or depreciate Carpaccio because the genius of Titian has the wider expanse. The lines of *Endymion* are not less musical because the poem, as a whole, falls below the epic level, and if they were, we have 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' and the Sonnets and the five Odes. The Saint Ursula pictures are not less sweet and gracious because they lack the majesty of the 'Assumption;' and if they were, we could solace ourselves with the 'St George' and the 'St Jerome.' And similarly, if we accept from Chopin what he has to give, we shall be in no mind to bear malice for what he is forced to withhold. His passion is so keen and vital, his melody so winning, his love of beauty so single-hearted, that to demand the sterner qualities is almost an act of ingratitude. He knows the full secret of that mysterious power—so easy to feel, so impossible to define—through which music fulfils its function of suggesting and typifying emotion. He can appeal to our sensuous nature with a mastery which is almost irresistible, and he never degrades the appeal into vulgarity or sensationalism. Under his spell even the display

of technical difficulty acquires life and significance. His Studies, avowedly classed as exercises of dexterity, stand to those of other writers as pictures to freehand drawing. His 'virtuoso passages' differ from those of Herz, and Hunten, and even Thalberg, as a pianoforte differs from a barrel-organ. In his lightest moment he is a poet: graceful in fancy, felicitous in expression, and instinct with the living spirit of romance.

There is hardly need to select examples of a gift which he exhibits on almost every page, yet a few typical instances may serve to concentrate our attention for a moment on the characteristic features of his melody, and to show the particular way in which he fulfilled the first requisite of a composer. Apart from works already considered, some special study may be given to the two Nocturnes, Op. 37, to the Ballade in A flat, to the second and third Impromptus, to the wonderful Étude in F minor, written for Moscheles, and to the fourth, eighth, fifteenth, nineteenth and twenty-third of the Preludes. These compositions are chosen, not because they are more tuneful than the rest—that is a question upon which every hearer must consult his own judgment—but because their elements of tunefulness seem to be in an eminent degree central and representative. No doubt many favourites will be found missing from the catalogue, the Prelude in C minor, the Nocturne in D flat, the more famous of the Waltzes and Polonaises; they have been purposely omitted, because, with all their beauty, they only contain tendencies of thought and manner which the list already exemplifies. As a rule, except for an occasional *appoggiatura*, Chopin keeps his melody within the strict limits of the dia-

tonic scale, or of some equally diatonic ecclesiastical mode, and uses his chromatic effects sometimes for the accompaniment figure, sometimes for the subsequent thematic treatment. His tunes, for the most part, are as simple in outline as folk-songs, and the moods which they imply, whether melancholy, tender, playful or passionate, are an outcome of the more direct personal emotions. Sometimes his thought is as transparent as that of a child, and appeals to our sympathy with all a child's unquestioning and irresistible confidence. Sometimes he strikes a deeper note with a no less frank, outspoken freedom of disclosure. And always, whether severe or vehement, whether gay or dejected, he offers for our admiration the same perfection of curve, the same delicate balance of rhythm, and the same plasticity of melodic stanza.

There are two characteristics in Chopin's music which deserve some detailed consideration,—first, his sense of harmony; second, his use of accompaniment figures. No doubt, as standpoints for general criticism, they are not of parallel importance; the one implies a habit of mind as a whole, the other denotes a degree of technical skill and technical efficiency. But in both respects Chopin occupies a position so far apart from that of other composers—in both his manner is so original, so unique, so far removed from common or customary ways—that in his work they assume an almost equal value and interest. Again, in estimating their worth, we are dealing with a more definite and concrete material than when we endeavour to outline with words the impalpable spirit of melody. The tunes of a musician, though they constitute the chief part of his gift, constitute also that

part which least admits of any profitable discussion ; and the very qualities, through which alone they are susceptible of analysis, can be more easily noted and appraised in the secondary functions of treatment and elaboration. We cannot gauge the success of an effort unless we have already ascertained its intention ; and the intention, though not always obscure in melody, is undoubtedly clearer to trace in the polyphonic scheme by which melody is supported and sustained.

Now, when we examine Chopin's harmony, we are at once struck with an apparent contradiction. We feel that, in its broader aspects, it is wonderfully pure and lucid, flowing along an established course, deviating but little from the simpler and more ordinary progressions. Yet every now and again we come across passages, the sight of which is enough to make orthodox professors of music 'stare and gasp ;'—passages which seem to break with resolute and unflinching defiance the elementary rules that stand at the beginning of our text-books. Worst of all, these apparent solecisms, the commission of which by any other hand would be wholly intolerable, offer themselves to our notice as though they were the most natural and regular forms of expression. They are not obvious slips, like the 'misprint' in the Ninth Symphony ; they are not importations from some alien musical language, like the occasional extravagances of Grieg or Dvořák ; on the contrary, they take our recognised system of harmonic laws, and literally honour it more in the breach than the observance. Are consecutive fifths and octaves forbidden ? There is, in one of the *Études*, a delightful passage, which consists exclusively of the prohibited

intervals.¹ Are consecutive major thirds justly regarded as harsh and dissonant? Chopin, at his dreamiest and most contemplative, can employ them with unfailing effect.² Is the dominant seventh a chord which, to all well-regulated ears, demands instant resolution? The twenty-first Mazurka rejects the claim, and sends one floating down four bars of chromatic scale with no hope of rest until it reaches the bottom. And the manner of composition which these instances exemplify can be traced in plenty of other phrases, less extreme, perhaps, but not less audacious. In parts of the fourth and sixth Nocturnes we can find harmonic schemes which it is probable no other musician would have ever dared to devise, schemes which set at naught our established distinctions of concord and discord, which display in unbroken series artifices that are usually kept for single isolated points of excitement, and which, nevertheless, are as undoubtedly intentional as they are undeniably successful in their aim.

There is no shirking the difficulty. Here is a composer who is brought up on Bach, and whose general sense of harmony is as pure and sincere as that of his great master. Here are passages, written by him with obvious care and deliberation, the acceptance of which would seem impossible without throwing discredit on the harmonic code. And, as climax of bewilderment, the code is right and the passages are beautiful. It may certainly appear for the moment as though there were no solution in view unless we take a despairing refuge in some Hegelian identification of opposites.

¹ Étude in D flat, Op. 25, No. 8.

² Étude in A flat, without Opus number.

Now, the impression which harmony produces is that of a third dimension in Music. It is the element of solidity and substance on which the melody rests. In a Chorale, for instance, the tune describes a sort of pattern on the superficies of the work, and the chords sustain and support it from underneath. And just as certain tunes can give us the effect of breadth, that is, of wide sweep over their superficial area, so certain harmonisations give us the effect of massiveness, that is, of strength and bulk in its substratum. It is not, of course, pretended that the artistic value of a composition can be summed up in so crude a metaphor: nothing more is attempted than to represent the one factor in the case, which is germane to the present purpose. Further, all the harmonic rules have been devised with a view to making the solid body of the Music as firm and compact as possible. They deal with the substratum, not with the superficies; with the perpendicular aspect, not with the horizontal. The law of consecutives is not held to be broken if in an orchestral piece a violin phrase is doubled by the violoncello or the bassoon: such a device gives us the lines of the pattern in duplicate, and lies altogether outside the material on which the pattern is superimposed. So in these disputed passages of Chopin. They are not really harmonic at all, they lie in the same plane as the melody, and, for their support, imply a separate and distinct scheme of chords, which the ear can always understand for itself.

A few examples may help to make this clearer. In the twelfth bar of the well-known Nocturne in E flat (Op. 9, No. 2), there is a connecting passage which, when we see it on paper, seems to consist of

a rapid series of remote and recondite modulations. When we hear it played in the manner which Chopin intended, we feel that there is only one real modulation, and that the rest of the passage is an iridescent play of colour, an effect of superficies, not an effect of substance. Precisely the same impression is produced in the middle section of the sixth Nocturne, and in the return to the opening theme at the end of the fifteenth. So it is with these apparent consecutives. They are not ungrammatical, because, like the Emperor Sigismund, they are 'supra grammaticam:' they do not defy harmonic laws because they belong to a different jurisdiction: in a word, they are to be treated not as harmonisations of their theme, but rather as new forms of melodic extension. Their real harmony is implied, not expressed: a construction to be understood from the general context and tenour of the passage: and it is because the general tenour is unmistakable that these 'sense constructions' are fully justified. Chopin's harmonic system, in short, is like a river—its surface wind-swept into a thousand variable crests and eddies, its current moving onward, full, steadfast and inevitable, bearing the whole volume of its waters by sheer force of depth and impetus.

Hence it is that of all musicians he is most at the mercy of his interpreters. Beethoven's *Adelaide* is 'so beautiful' that not even Mr du Maurier's tenor 'can make it ridiculous:' but there are few of us who have not seen Chopin crushed out of recognition in the grasp of some conscientious and heavy-handed pianist. These surface-effects lose all their charm if they are played with stress and insistance, if they are forced down into a third dimension, which they

were never intended to fill. There is much of Chopin's music in which solidity of execution is as fatal as strictness of time; in which the phrases are essentially light, wayward, aerial, demanding for their interpretation not only the most flexible sympathy of feeling, but the daintiest delicacy of touch. Even Moscheles, great musician as he was, found himself baffled by the new style. 'Chopin has just been playing to me,' he writes, 'and now for the first time I understand his music. The *rubato*, which, with his other interpreters, degenerates into disregard of time, is with him only a charming originality of manner: the harsh modulations which strike me disagreeably when I am playing his compositions no longer shock me, because he glides over them in a fairy-like way with his delicate fingers. His *piano* is so soft that he does not need any strong *forte* to produce his contrasts: and for this reason one does not miss the orchestral effects which the German school requires from a pianoforte player, but allows oneself to be carried away as by a singer who, little concerned about the accompaniment, entirely follows his emotion.' We of the present day may express ourselves with more warmth of approbation; but if we wish to understand Chopin, this is the standpoint from which we must regard him.

The second point for consideration is the almost incomparable power which Chopin displays in his use of accessory figures. By figure, in this sense, is meant a certain group of notes, having a clearly defined curve and rhythm, and maintained, with such changes as the harmony necessitates, through a phrase, or a paragraph, or even a complete work.

In the use of this device there are two difficulties against which a composer has to contend. On the one hand, the group, if it is to command any part of the hearer's attention, must exhibit a distinct character, almost a distinct melody of its own; on the other hand, it will fail of its purpose unless it is sufficiently plastic to be adapted to different context and different requirements. Now, it is obvious that the more allegiance is claimed by the first of these conditions, the more skill is needed in order to satisfy the second. A figure which consists merely of simple *arpeggios* or of plain repeated chords can suffer any degree of harmonic alteration without loss of continuity; but as its intrinsic interest is heightened, either by elaboration of curve or by peculiarity of rhythm, so it becomes more individual, and therefore, under a change of circumstance, more difficult to adjust. Thus it not infrequently happens that a composer is forced to remodel his scheme because the group of notes which he has devised to support the first strain of his melody proves unsuitable to the next; or because a curve, that can adequately fill a bar of uniform harmony, may lose all fitness when applied to a bar in which the harmony changes. In Schumann's *Widmung*, for instance, the beautiful accompaniment figure wavers in the third bar, and breaks down altogether in the fourth; not because the composer wishes to put forward a new pattern, for he retains the rhythm of the old, but because nothing short of a total alteration of curve will satisfy the harmonic conditions of the tune.

But, so far as concerns this particular exhibition of skill, we never feel that Chopin is at the mercy of

his materials. His simplest figures are interesting, his most elaborate are moulded to his use with an entire and unhesitating mastery. Under his hand the stubborn edges grow smooth, the obdurate lines become pliant and tractable, the recurrent shape preserves its unity without appearing wearisome or monotonous. The Prelude in F sharp minor (No. 8) is perhaps the most astonishing instance in music of this particular form of decorative effect; and hardly less remarkable are the *Étude* in E flat minor (Op. 10, No. 6), the Prelude in G major (No. 3), and the Prelude in F sharp major (No. 13). Indeed, Chopin's method of ornament is altogether his own; sensuous it may be in origin, evoked, at any rate in part, by an imperious craving for the pleasure of beautiful sound, but yet raised to the true artistic level by its refinement of taste and its finished accuracy of detail. It is no small matter that a type of art which appeals so frequently to sense and emotion should never be either vulgar or trivial or commonplace; that there should be nothing meretricious in its sentiment, nothing indolent in its expression; that with every incentive to a lax and careless Hedonism it should yet maintain an ideal of unswerving labour.

So far Chopin's music has been treated from the creative side. It now remains to add a few words on the peculiar tact and intelligence with which he employs his medium. In pictorial art this quality is of acknowledged importance: oil, water, pastel, have their own conditions and their own limitations, to overstep which is to invite failure; and it is recognised as an adverse criticism if we can say of an example in any one process that its

effects could have been equally well produced by another.

The same law is valid in musical art. The orchestra, the string quartett, the organ, the pianoforte, are so diverse in tone and so disparate in character, that they admit no community of treatment, and hardly even a close community of idea. An arrangement may sometimes be condoned as a *tour de force*, it may sometimes be allowed as a preparation or a means of study, but to regard it as possessing any absolute value is to convict the original work of a serious imperfection. It is, therefore, a high testimony to the exactitude of Chopin's writing that it has almost entirely escaped the sacrilegious hand of the transcriber. Some of the Mazurkas are occasionally adapted for the voice, one or two of the Nocturnes misused to the service of the violin or the violoncello : but by far the greater number of Chopin's compositions are too obviously suited to the piano for any other medium to be regarded as possible. His very narrowness gave him concentration : his want of sympathy with all other instruments enabled him to devote his whole attention to the one that he understood. And, as a result, he gives us Pianoforte Music which, considered as a pure expression of technical intelligence, is almost without rival in the history of the art. No other composer has ever surpassed the unerring judgment to which we owe these wide-spread *arpeggios*, these wonderful liquid ripples of chromatic scale, these showers of sparkling notes which fall, as Liszt said, 'like dew drops' on some bend of phrase or turn of cadence. Beethoven, of course, understood the piano as fully as he understood everything else : but since

Beethoven's time musicians, and especially romantic musicians, have a little tended to blur and obliterate these necessary distinctions, and to merge a due recognition of piano technique into their overmastering desire for emotional significance. Hence the fatal error of trying to extract orchestral effects from the keyboard, an error into which Schumann falls occasionally, and Liszt habitually, but from which Chopin may be regarded as entirely free. In a word, he appreciates both the capacities and the limitations of his material, and, while he draws from it every tone that it can legitimately produce, he never strains it beyond the due and fitting bounds of its proper individuality. It may be noted that Mendelssohn had something of the same gift, but in pianoforte music, Mendelssohn's thought is shallower than that of Chopin, and, therefore, more easily kept within its range. Indeed, since 1827, there has been no composer who could unite such poignancy of feeling with so exact an estimate of the means at his disposal.

To sum up, Chopin can claim no place among the few greatest masters of the world. He lacks the dignity, the breadth, the high seriousness of Palestrina and Bach and Beethoven: he no more ranks beside them than Shelley beside Shakespear, or Andrea beside Michael Angelo. But to say this is not to disparage the value of the work that he has done. If he be not of the 'di majorum gentium,' he is none the less of the Immortals, filled with a supreme sense of beauty, animated by an emotional impulse as keen as it was varied, and upholding an ideal of technical perfection at a time when it was in danger of being lost by the poets or degraded by the

virtuosi. In certain definite directions he has enlarged the possibilities of the art, and though he has, fortunately, founded no school—for the charm of his music is wholly personal—yet in a thousand indirect ways he has influenced the work of his successors. At the same time, it is not as a pioneer that he elicits our fullest admiration. We hardly think of him as marking a stage in the general course and progress of artistic History, but, rather, as standing aside from it, unconscious of his relation to the world, preoccupied with the fairyland of his own creations. The elements of myth and legend that have already gathered round his name may almost be said to find their counterparts in his music; it is ethereal, unearthly, enchanted, an echo from the melodies of Kubla Khan. It is for this reason that he can only make his complete appeal to certain moods and certain temperaments. The strength of the hero is as little his as the vulgarity of the demagogue: he possesses an intermediate kingdom of dreams, an isle of fantasy, where the air is drowsy with perfume, and the woods are bright with butterflies, and the long gorges run down to meet the sea. If his music is sometimes visionary, at least it is all beautiful; offering, it may be, no response to the deeper questions of our life, careless if we approach it with problems which it is in no mind to resolve, but fascinating in its magic if we are content to submit our imagination to the spell. And precisely the same distinction may be made on the formal side of his work. In structure he is a child, playing with a few simple types, and almost helpless as soon as he advances beyond them; in phraseology he is a master whose felicitous perfection of style is one of the abiding treasures of the

art. There have been higher ideals in Music, but not one that has been more clearly seen or more consistently followed. There have been nobler messages, but none delivered with a sweeter or more persuasive eloquence.

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK



Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt.

GOETHE.

Antonin Dvořák



I

DAYS OF PREPARATION

THE village of Nelahozeves lies on the Moldau, about a mile to the north of Kralup. The clean, well-kept cottages sun themselves upon a slope of the low hills, or nestle among the trees by the river bank; a tiny street comes trickling along the shallow dale like a tributary; at its mouth a great square castle rises on a spur of jutting sandstone and seems to dominate the very landscape by feudal right. Behind are uplands of corn and pasture and orchard, where you may idle for half a summer's afternoon, watching the play of light tremulous among the leaves, the smoke curling lazily from the cluster of red roofs, and below them the brown turbid river and the long timber-rafts floating down to the Elbe.

It is one of the quietest of places: hardly a sound, hardly an animal, hardly a sign of life. There are a few geese meditating undisturbed in the roadway, there is a knot of children busy with some inexplicable game in a corner of waste ground; now and again a couple of gossips come to fill their shapely wooden cans at

the village well, or a slow, patient ox-cart bears down its fragrant load from the hay-field. For the rest, everything is fast asleep, secure in a bounteous land that asks but little labour for the satisfaction of daily needs, and secure, too, under the government of Prince Lobkowitz, who owns the castle and the village and half the country-side, and who, though he never comes to live among his own people, has always administered his territory with justice and beneficence.

At the bottom of the street a lane turns across toward the church, passing on its way a homestead which could take rank with an English farm-house of moderate pretension. An arched gateway gives access to a long, narrow court-yard, flanked on the one side by a solid, two-storey building, white-walled and red-roofed like its neighbours; on the other by a lower range of offices and storehouses; while at the back, behind the stable, runs a rough wall, surmounted by a statue of St Florian; and, carrying the eye upward, through a strip of coarse paddock, to the hedgerows and cornfields of the higher slope. A sign over the entrance announces that the place is still the village inn, as it was half a century ago, when Pàn Frantisek Dvořák held it in tenancy and served his customers in the little taproom by the door.

Among the villagers Pàn Dvořák was a person of some consequence. For one thing, he belonged to a family old and respected—a peasant stock that had grown and flourished from the earliest times that memory could record; for another, he had married the daughter of one of the Prince's bailiffs, and so caught a faint reflection from the remote and inaccessible glories of the castle. Again, he was butcher

as well as innkeeper, and so represented the centre of village trade, as well as the focus of village conviviality; and, to crown all, he was personally popular—a handsome, active youngster of eight-and-twenty, vigorous, alert, clean-limbed; and a good musician, too, who of an evening would bring his zither under the great walnut tree and delight his guests with ‘Hej Slované’ or ‘Sedlák Sedlák,’ or the new national anthem that was going to rouse Bohemia against Austrian oppression. It is only natural that he should figure large in the public gaze, and that there should be great rejoicings when, on September 8, 1841, the villagers assembled to drink the health of his firstborn.

The child grew up into a sturdy, broad-shouldered boy, with brown eyes, dark complexion, and a tangle of black hair—keen and adventurous in character, ready to join in any sports that were afoot, and, as tradition still attests, well able to hold his own in conflict. From the first he was passionately fond of music—listening in eager enjoyment when his father played to him, or when, on some lucky day, a band of wandering musicians would come from Kralup or Prague or even Pressnitz, and earn itself a welcome at the inn door. Better still were the times of village holiday, when the street was gay with stalls, and the dancers wore down the evening sun—Lenka in snowy hood and bright kirtle, Hanik in jaunty hat, long coat and drab knee-breeches, threading the mazes of Polka and Furiant until the fiddlers gave in for very weariness. It was a childhood of simple pleasures and healthy out-door life, full of colour, full of melody, the first preparation for a brilliant and honourable artistic career.

Meantime the more serious part of Dvořák's education was entrusted to an amiable pedagogue called Josef Spitz, who kept the village school at the street corner, and who not only taught his new scholar the rudiments of letters, but, what was more important, gave him his first lessons in singing and the violin. When he was twelve years old, the boy was sent to live with an uncle at Zlonic, in the coal country, where there was a better school and a wider opportunity of study. He had already made some advance in his two branches of music—enough, at any rate, for him to have taken the solos in the church choir at home, and to have borne an efficient part in the local orchestra: now, under the tuition of Liehmann, the Zlonic organist, he ventured out into new fields, and learned something not only of organ and piano but of the elements of musical theory. No doubt the instruction was very imperfect and very narrow of range, but within its limits it was gratefully accepted; and the old kapellmeister deserves some honourable mention as having been the first to discover evidences of unusual capacity in his shy, simple-hearted pupil. In 1855 came another transference; this time to Böhmisch-Kamnitz, where Dvořák learned German, and continued his musical studies with the organist Hancke; and then appeared an obstacle which seemed likely to block progress altogether. His father had recently removed to Zlonic in order to open a new shop on a larger scale; another hand was wanted to carry on the trade; and Antonin, at the age of fifteen, was told to regard his education as finished, and to return at once to the real business of his life.

It is easy enough to emphasise the incongruity of

the situation: to recall Burns the gauger and Keats the apothecary's drudge: to condole with an artist who, like Fortuny, has to seek inspiration from the shambles. It is still easier to be wise after the event, and condemn, as tyrannous and unreasonable, a decision which time has signally refuted. But there are here two considerations which may serve, in some degree, to modify judgment. In the first place, the condition of music in Bohemia was, at this time, entirely different from that in France or Germany: its outlook far more desperate, its prizes far more unattainable. Nearly all the posts were held by Germans, and native talent, unless it could afford the price of expatriation, might readily find itself reduced to gathering pence by the wayside, or at most, would earn its reward in some village organistship—scanty, obscure and ill-paid, with little opportunity in the present and with no hope of further advance. No one could have foreseen that, within six years, a national art would spring into sudden and unexpected existence—bringing with it a means of expression which, in 1856, lay outside the reach of the most sanguine hope. It may be true that the darkest hour is that which precedes the dawn; but, for all this, it takes a robust faith to infer the dawn from the darkness. And, in the second place, the boy had as yet neither the education nor the material to offer his father any convincing proofs of genius. So far as we know, he had never written a note of music, and, though he could play skilfully on two or three instruments, there was no very great likelihood of his making his name as a virtuoso. His credentials were the reports of three village schoolmasters: his attainment was but a promise which

the subsequent career might have failed to ratify. In a word, the capacity was uncertain, the chances of a career were almost non-existent: surely it was not unnatural that a plain man, who had no gift of prophecy, should balance present alternatives and sum them up in favour of competence and comfort.

At any rate, whether justified or not, the order was irrevocable. Pleas and entreaties proved equally unavailing, Hancke's protests fell upon deaf ears, and at last Dvořák reluctantly prepared to leave Kamnitz and to sacrifice all prospects of an artistic profession. But before yielding, he determined to make one more bid for freedom. Hitherto his father had known him only as an executant: perhaps the case would be altered if he could present himself as a composer. There were plenty of people in the country-side who could sing and play; it was little wonder if, amid that undistinguished crowd, his abilities were unnoticed; but to write music brings a man to the forefront, and shows a gift which it may be profitable to stimulate and encourage. He therefore prepared his last appeal in the shape of an original polka; copied the band parts, distributed them secretly among the Zlonic musicians, and, after a few days of breathless anticipation, launched his *coup de théâtre* for the conversion of an unexpectant household. It is better to draw a veil over the performance. The composer did not know that the trumpet is a transposing instrument: strings and wind contended strenuously in different keys; there was an agonised moment of jagged and excruciating discord; and it is not surprising that the family remained unconvinced. There is some little irony in the disaster, if it be remembered that among all Dvořák's gifts the instinct of

orchestration is perhaps the most conspicuous. He is the greatest living exponent of the art; and he was once in danger of forfeiting his career through ignorance of its most elementary principle.

After so inopportune a failure, there was nothing left but submission, and for little short of a year Dvořák set himself with a good grace to accept the inevitable. But by the spring of 1857 he began to feel that the position was impossible, and once more assailed his father with urgent entreaties. There were his brothers—František, Josef, Adolf, Karel—growing up to take his place in the shop; there was no pressing need that he should remain any longer at work which he found wholly uncongenial; he was sure that he could succeed as a musician, and whether he succeeded or not, his whole heart was set upon the attempt. At last, after some months of anxious discussion, he carried his point, and in October set out for Prague—full of hope, full of ambition, eager to explore a realm of which hitherto he could hardly be said to have passed the frontier.

At Prague he entered the Organ School (founded some thirty years before by a society for the encouragement of ecclesiastical music), and, from 1857 to 1860, worked his way through a period of diligent and laborious studentship. The difficulties that beset him were even greater than those that traditionally obstruct the path of genius. At first, no doubt, his father was able to make him a small monthly allowance; but even this slender income had soon to be withdrawn, and the boy, at sixteen years of age, was left to maintain himself by an art of which he knew little more than the rudiments, in a city which was almost wholly barren of opportunities.

And it was not only the material problems of food and lodging that pressed him for a solution. He had learned next to nothing of composition, he was totally unacquainted with the great classics, he had no books and no money to buy them; even the teaching of his school seems to have been mainly concentrated upon organ technique, and to have given little or no assistance in wider fields of study. Berlioz was poor, but at least he had the library of the Paris Conservatoire. Wagner spent two years of grinding poverty, but at least he could compensate them with 'Rienzi' and the 'Flying Dutchman.' Here is a case in which everything alike is denied—not only recognition but power, not only the rewards of life but its very appliances. The most certain confidence, the most indomitable courage, might well have lost heart at a prospect so dreary and so dispiriting.

In order to obtain the bare means of livelihood he joined a small band of some twenty performers, and went about with them, earning a meagre pittance at the cafés and restaurants of the city. On Sundays he played the viola at a private chapel, where there was some show of an orchestral service, and, between his two engagements, contrived to amass a revenue of rather more than thirty shillings a month. Of course all systematic study, except at his organ classes, appeared to be out of the question. He could no more have hired a piano than he could have purchased the crown jewels; even music paper was a luxury of the rarest indulgence; and concerts were only attainable, when, now and again, some good-natured bandsman would see him standing wistfully at the door and would let him in as a stowaway. But in spite of all discouragements, he continued his

work with unabating enthusiasm, and, in 1860, graduated at the Organ School as second prizeman of his year.

By a notable coincidence it happened that the fresh-levied forces of Bohemian music received their marching orders at almost exactly the same time. As Dvořák emerged from the training-yard to take his place among the ranks, there was already assembling a council of war which, before it rose, should appoint a national leader and proclaim a national advance. True, another decade was to pass before the new recruit bore any prominent part in the movement. As yet he was only a trooper, carrying his marshal's bâton in his knapsack, but bound, nevertheless, to wait in patient subservience until the fortune of battle gave him his opportunity. Yet, for all that, the difference made by the winter of 1860 was almost incalculable. It is one thing to idle in barracks with no cause to defend and no victory to share: it is another to stand at attention on the outskirts of the field when the front is busy with the enemy and at any moment an aide-de-camp may ride up with orders to engage. Hardly in the whole of artistic history shall we find a stranger chance than that which, against all expectation, brought the two centuries of bondage to so opportune a close.

It is beyond the scope of the present essay to describe the national movement in any detail. There are so many lines of progress, there are so many conflicting issues, that the task cannot adequately be attempted from the standpoint of a single art. But, to estimate the music of Dvořák, it is first requisite that we should understand his relation to his country, and trace, in however brief an outline, the

course of revolution that culminated in his triumph. He plays so important a part in the later acts of a patriotic drama, that we may well be excused for prefacing his entry with some slight epitome of the plot.

Up to the Thirty Years' War, Bohemia maintained an honourable place in the fore-front of European civilisation. She was printing books when hardly any of her neighbours could read them: she inaugurated one of the greatest religious movements of the Middle Ages: her university took rank with Paris and Oxford: her teaching was accepted by scholars from every corner of Christendom. But in 1620 the whole national life came to a sudden and tragic end—shot down by Tilly's mercenaries at the battle of the White Mountain. The loss of political independence was followed by an almost entire cessation of intellectual activity: the language was prohibited, the literature was destroyed, arts and sciences either passed into servitude or fled with the 'Winter King' to a distant and inglorious exile: the voice that was once eloquent in the congress of the nations died away into silence and oblivion. 'Better a desert,' said the Emperor Ferdinand, 'than a land full of heretics,' and his order was followed with only too literal an obedience. For the next hundred and fifty years the history of Bohemia is a blank page: her highest achievement to bear the yoke of an alien power, her utmost hope to forget that she was once a people.

It is true that, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a few Bohemian musicians began to make their appearance: it is equally significant that, without exception, they left their native land and tried their

fortunes as free-lances in a foreign service. Mysliveček won his title of 'Il Divino' from the careless enthusiasm of Italy; Reicha settled in Paris, where his lectures on composition embittered the early years of Berlioz: Dussek, the greatest of them all, became frankly German in aim and method: from first to last they turned their steps across the border in search of a career which their own country was too fast in prison to afford. It is, of course, idle to reproach them with a want of patriotism: there was no cause to which patriotism could attach itself: but none the less we may find in their denial of their country a conclusive reason for their ultimate failure. They were men of undoubted gifts—rapid, facile and copious of production, well-read in the musical learning of their time, fluent of phrase, prompt of resource, skilful and dexterous in the treatment of their material; and yet, at the distance of a century, there is only one of the whole band who is anything more than a name to us. Even Dussek has but a fading reputation: his work is lost under the shadow of its own laurels: and for the rest, it is not once in a decade that some student takes down their dusty volumes from the shelf and marvels at the misapplied talent and the wasted ability.

A curious illustration, half pathetic and half humorous, may be found in the career of Anthony Heinrich. He was born at Schönbüchel in 1781, served his apprenticeship at Covent Garden, and finally established himself in America, where, for some five-and-thirty years, he produced a continuous series of ineffectual compositions. There is an oratorio, written in ten real parts, and 'scored,' as its author proudly affirms, 'for all known orchestral instruments:' there are

symphonies, such as the *Eroica* and the *Tower of Babel*; there are overtures—one to Washington, another to Niagara, another to the great Condor of the Andes; there are ‘Mythological concerti grossi;’ there are scenes from the Autobiography of a Troubadour; there are songs, studies, virtuoso-pieces without limit. It should be added that the official catalogue, which is appended to the excerpts in the National Museum at Prague, mentions with particular emphasis a concert overture *per recte et retro*, entitled ‘The Advance and the Retreat.’ If this incredible composition was ever written, it says something for Heinrich’s counterpoint, and at the same time explains his total failure to win any position as an artist. But, apart from this, the explanation lies open on every page. Here is talent, here is technical skill, here is even some approach to originality: and the whole is ruined by uncertainty of aim and by want of earnestness. It all lies on the surface; it has no character, no stability, no inherent power of growth, and because it has no root it withers away.

We may conclude that the first efforts of the Bohemian renaissance were wholly misdirected and unavailing. The national art was no more to be created by ‘La Consolation’ than by mythological concerti grossi and overtures to the great condor. But in the meantime a small body of men was beginning at home to collect the scattered ruins of past achievement, and to lay them in order as the foundation of a more durable superstructure. Scholars like Dobrovsky set themselves to regather the language from the valleys and uplands of a rustic dialect: poets like Tyl and Hálek built up a fabric of literature from the artless rhymes of the country village:

music itself began to stir, to awaken, to stand on the alert until its time should come. There could be little organisation, for the citadel was still in the hands of an adverse power; there could be little publicity, for the work might be at any moment prohibited by official censorship: but, in spite of all obstacles and difficulties, the movement gradually took shape and direction—now hampered by popular indifference, now thrown back by some political outbreak, never losing heart or turning aside from its purpose. Yet, before its purpose could be attained, there were two further conditions to satisfy. Hitherto the pioneers of Bohemian music, like those of the French language, had conducted their research as a matter of private interest and private enterprise: before they could combine into an academy of any mark or moment, they needed a parliamentary charter, and they needed a Malherbe. In other words, to encourage the hope of any further progress, it was necessary—first, that Austria should allow its dependent State a fuller measure of intellectual freedom; and secondly, that there should appear some man of sufficient authority and genius to undertake the leadership.

A sudden turn of the wheel, and the two conditions were fulfilled. In October 1860 the gift of liberty was granted by Imperial diploma; a few months later came news that Smetana had resigned his appointment at Gothenburg, and that he was returning to assume the direction of the national forces. His arrival was welcomed with an enthusiasm to which Bohemia had long been a stranger; new hopes were formed, new plans were discussed, the whole land shook off its lethargy and applied

itself eagerly to the work. For his own part, the leader announced his method without hesitation. He had no sympathy with the more developed classical forms: in any case, he found them unsuitable to a music of which the very foundations were still to be laid: the first need, he said, was to engage the popular ear, and to show the true value and import of the national melodies. Bohemia should cut her cornerstone from her own quarries, and build her art on the peasant tunes in which the whole of her musical tradition was comprised. The next generation might look to questions of treatment; the business of the present was to gather material, and to utilise the abundant store which lay neglected in every village and hamlet of the country-side.

It is interesting to see the new Malherbe making his appeal to the people, and 'finding his masters in language among the porters at the hay-gate.' But there can be no doubt that, under existing conditions, his method was the only means of attaining success. The first requisite for a national art is the establishment of a national speech; and until this is done in its simplest and most unsophisticated shape, there is no proper material for the artist to work upon. Of course, the great structures of sonata and symphony are only developments of the form that is already held in germ by the folk-song: still they are developments, and to begin with them is to begin at the wrong end. The same life runs through the whole course of artistic evolution, but, if there be life at all, it will trace its origin from its most rudimentary embodiment.

Again, it was a stroke of good-fortune that Smetana's genius should turn at once in the direc-

tion of opera. Among all means of artistic expression, the theatre is the most direct and the most comprehensive: it draws on the resources of literature, of painting, of music; it can reach a public that has not yet learned to appreciate the separate forms. The golden age of French poetry began with the *Cid*; the whole history of modern music began with *Eurydice*: in like manner, Bohemia may date her renaissance from her first school of operatic composers. In 1862 the Interimstheater was opened; in 1863 came Smetana's '*Brandenburgs in Bohemia*,' then followed a long and unbroken series of dramatic works—tragedy that took its theme from patriotic legend, comedy that turned to account the picturesque humours of the village life—all of native growth and of native origin, racy of the soil, simple, genuine, unaffected. To us, who look upon Prague from the standpoints of Dresden or Vienna, the music of these men may seem unduly artless and immature: with Wagner on the one side, with Brahms on the other, we have little time to bestow on tentative efforts and incomplete production. Some day we shall learn that we are in error. The '*Bartered Bride*' is an achievement that would do credit to any nation in Europe; and, apart from its intrinsic value, it claims our interest as the turning-point of an artistic revolution. There is little wonder that Smetana has been almost canonised by his people. He was, in the truest sense of the term, the first Bohemian composer; and, though his country has one son to whose work she may look with a fuller admiration, she has none to whom she owes the debt of a more profound and cordial gratitude.

Such was the cause in which Dvořák found him-

self enlisted when he closed behind him the door of the Organ School, and set forth boldly in quest of a career. At first, no doubt, his part in the movement was humble enough: he had not yet tried his strength, he had not yet won his spurs, he had not shown any qualification that could raise him above the bare level of the rank-and-file. But, in the meantime, his opportunities of education were gradually widening. A place was offered him in the orchestra of the Interimstheater, which not only made him a member of the patriotic party, but threw him into closer relation with its more prominent representatives; and, from one of these—Karel Bendl, the composer—he received assistance and encouragement at a time when both were sorely needed. He was still too poor to buy scores; but now, thanks to the kindness of Bendl, he was able to borrow them; and his own force and energy soon recovered the ground that he had lost through the tyranny of circumstance. Every spare kreutzer was expended on music-paper; every free hour was devoted to study or composition; for nearly twelve years there followed a course of training as complete as the most rigorous self-discipline could make it. In all this period, nothing is less important than the record of its external events. There were some whispers of plot and counter-plot after Sadowa: there was some little excitement when the ‘Hussite’ riots took place, and Prague was declared to be in a state of siege; there was an outburst of rejoicing on the arrival of the second Imperial diploma: but these were mere matters of political change, which art had by this time grown strong enough to disregard. Even the history of the Theatre passes for the moment

into a remoter background. The true biographical interest is centred within the four walls of a meagre lodging, where, day after day, an obscure student sat poring over Beethoven, in hopes to discover the secret of that magic style which transmutes all fancies into gold, and the elements of that unknown elixir which brings to music the gift of immortal life.

II

DURCH KAMPF ZU LICHT

THE record of Dvořák's earlier compositions is involved in a good deal of doubt and perplexity. Many of the works were meant simply as exercises and were destroyed as soon as their purpose had been fulfilled: some still remain in manuscript: one or two have passed beyond the reach of conjecture. But at least it appears certain that a string quintett was completed by 1862, that shortly afterwards followed two volumes of songs, printed later as Op. 2 and Op. 3, and that in 1865 came a symphony in B flat (Op. 4),¹ and another in E minor. There is some mention, too, of a grand opera on the subject of Alfred, the libretto of which seems to have been taken from an old German almanack; but the score has long ago vanished into space, and has left behind it nothing more than the bare title. For the rest, we can only say that they would serve to illustrate Bacon's allegory of the 'River of Time.' A few pages of ballad and romance have floated down to us—a dozen songs, a set of short pieces for the pianoforte, a violin tune with orchestral accompaniment—and all the more serious production has sunk on the way. Yet enough is left to give presage of future greatness.

¹ This opus number is appended to the autograph score. The Quintett and both the symphonies are still unpublished.



ANTONIN DVORÁK



No hand but Dvořák's could have written *Blumen-deutung* or *Die Sterne*, or *Der Herr erschuf das Menschenherz*. The work may be slight of structure and narrow of range, but from the first it bears clear impress of its author's own character.

During all this time he seems to have made no attempt at publication or performance. We can hardly suppose that his silence was altogether enforced by lack of occasion: his friend Bendl was conductor of the chief choral society in Prague; his friend Smetana was in supreme command at the opera: patriotism was searching every corner for evidences of native genius, and would scarcely have refused him the hearing that it had granted to Sebor and Roskosny. But as yet he had nothing ready to offer. His more ambitious efforts appeared, for the most part, tentative and experimental; the songs, in which alone his true personality had found expression, were to be kept in reserve until he had made his mark with a broader line: on all grounds, it was better to wait in retirement than to injure the cause by a premature display. Once let him attain to some adequate mastery of his materials, and Fate might well be trusted to supply him with opportunity.

At last, apparently in 1871, he was commissioned to write an opera for the Bohemian Theatre,¹ and accepted the invitation with all the responsibility that a first appearance naturally entails. He had, indeed, no little reason to feel responsible. He was now nine-and-twenty years of age, he had spent two-thirds of his life in study and preparation, he was entering that

¹ See a complete history of this work in the preface to the present libretto; see also Dr Stecker's article on Dvořák in the new '*Bohemian Encyclopædia*.' Both these authorities give 1871 as the date.

field in which his country's art had hitherto reaped the richer portion of its harvest. Besides, he had recently become acquainted with some of Wagner's work, and was in a state of intense proselytising enthusiasm on the subject of the Music drama. The little folk-song operas were pretty enough, and possessed, no doubt, a true educational value; but the level of public taste was now sufficiently high to appreciate a more solid and serious form of composition. In short, the first period of Bohemian music was drawing to a close, and this commission from the theatre had come, just in the nick of time, to inaugurate the second. He therefore took for his libretto a peasant comedy entitled 'King and Collier,' set it on the most elaborate Wagnerian lines, and, having thus marked in strong relief the difference between his method and that of his predecessors, went confidently down to the theatre and distributed the parts for rehearsal.

There is no great sagacity required to foretell the result. We can imagine the consternation of Smetana, who looked for a new expression of the national idiom, and found himself confronted with a fantastic exaggeration of *Meistersinger*. We can imagine the dismay of the soloists, accustomed to melody as simple as that of Mozart, and now lost in a tangle of declamatory phrases. The music was at once declared to be wholly impossible, the score was returned with a few disheartening compliments, and Dvořák went back to his place in the ranks, there to meditate at his leisure on the incompatibility of alien systems. It was no doubt unfortunate that his chance should have come to him in a moment of aberration. His Wagner-worship was but a sudden episode, of which

no trace can be found in the earlier compositions, of which little or no effect remains in the record of the later work: and it was a sorry jest of the fates, that offered him a native audience at the one period in his life when he had forsaken the native tongue.

But on an apt pupil a lesson, even from Orbilius, is never wasted. Once recovered from the disappointment, Dvořák realised that he was on the wrong tack; that he was forcing his genius in a direction to which it was unsuited; and that if he wished to convince his countrymen, he must address them not in German but in Slavonic. After all, the recent disaster was only a parenthesis; an otiose quotation that could be readily erased: henceforward he would deliver his message in the phraseology that was its natural embodiment. So, by way of palinode, he set Hálek's fine patriotic hymn, 'The Heirs of the White Mountain,' a poem which, in scope and feeling, may almost rank as the counterpart of Leopardi's 'Italia'; and, in the season of 1873, made with it an appeal to that national sympathy which his last work had done so little to conciliate. No choice could have been more happily inspired. The theme was one of which patriotism was never weary; the strong, manly verses were already familiar as household words; the music held the concert-room in breathless attention from the sombre opening to the great, glorious cadence in the final stanza. There was no longer any question of his place in Bohemian art. At one stroke the memory of old failure was obliterated; at one step the patriot passed from obscurity into the full light of honour and reputation.

As yet, however, there was little hope of material reward. It was still the day of small things in

Bohemia: posts were few; salaries were meagre; fame spread but slowly across the mountain barriers by which the frontier was encircled. But in any case, it was impossible that Dvořák should remain any longer in his present penury, and at some time in 1873 he was appointed organist to the city church of St Adalbert. The change was somewhat incongruous after eleven years' viola playing in a theatre orchestra, but at least it brought him a more individual position, opened to him some career as a teacher, and assured him a stipend upon which he found it possible to marry. A pleasant indication of altered circumstances is to be found in an 'Ave Maris Stella,' dedicated 'uxori carissimæ,' and printed 'sumptibus et proprietate Emilii Stary.' When a man is raised to ecclesiastical office, the least that he can do is to assume the state and dignity of a learned language.

In the winter of 1873 appeared a nocturno for strings, followed in the next year by a symphony in E flat, and the scherzo of a symphony in D minor. Meantime, the theatre, which had been keeping a watchful eye on its truant ever since his return to the paths of patriotism, once more summoned him into its presence, and made amends for past disfavour by the offer of another commission. For answer, Dvořák took the old libretto that had shared the misfortune of his *début*, reset it from beginning to end, and in less than three months, presented to the directors a new version of the unlucky drama, in which, it is said, not one bar of the original score was preserved. The feat is one of the most remarkable in the history of opera. There are plenty of cases in which a composer has altered or revised

his work—Wagner made additions to *Tannhäuser*, Weber reluctantly excised an important scene from *Der Freischütz*—but it is one thing to remodel a few details; it is another to reorganise an entire structure. Some little versatility is required to set even a song in two different ways; much more to find a new musical expression for a complete cast of *dramatis personæ*.

But the most curious part of the story is still to come. The second version of 'King and Collier' was produced on October 24th, and at once revealed the fact that its libretto was totally inadequate. The *tour de force*, in short, had altogether failed, and Dvořák found that he had only escaped the charge of melody that could not be sung, to meet with equally galling condolence on a play that could not be acted. No doubt the music was welcomed with acclamation, especially the overture and the scene in the collier's cottage, but its very transparency brought into clearer view the manifest imperfection of the words. It was a thousand pities, said the critics, that so great a composer should have spent his genius on a rambling incoherent farce with a poor plot, a hero eminently unheroic, and a third act merely irrelevant and absurd. He would have done far better if he had followed the more common-place method of providing himself with another subject.

Dvořák, however, was not to be beaten. He knew that his own part in the work had been satisfactorily played; he could see no reason for losing his labour; and so, after an interval which was occupied in further compositions, he set himself to look for a new librettist. In course of time he met with a poet called Novotny, who had just written an opera-book

for Smetana, called him into collaboration, and produced, with his aid, a final version of the play in which the first two acts are considerably altered, and the third replaced by a more adequate substitute. There can be no doubt that the changes were of vital improvement. In its present form the intrigue runs easily enough, the characters are well drawn, the situations are mainly striking and effective, and the mock trial brings down the curtain on a climax of fitting irony. But we are here less concerned with a criticism of the result than with a sketch of the remarkable series of conditions under which it was effected. An opera of which the text is rewritten and the music recomposed is a phenomenon sufficiently unusual to demand more than a passing word of comment. The Irishman's knife, which had a new blade and a new handle, does not offer a more bewildering problem of identity.

It was natural that the fresh interest should bring Dvořák, for the time, into a more intimate relation with the Bohemian Theatre. By the end of 1875 he had completed two more operas; one a bright little village comedy called 'The Stubborn Heads'; one a tragedy in five acts, on the subject of Vanda, Queen of Poland. The latter is at present beyond the reach of discussion; even the opera-house at Prague possesses no copy of the score, and no part of the music has yet been printed, except the fine gloomy overture. But the former, which, for some reason, was kept in reserve until 1882, is now easily attainable, and may well claim a better fate than our indifference has accorded to it. The theme is simplicity itself. Farmer Vavra has a grown-up son; Widow Rihova, who lives over the way, has a marriageable daughter; of course they lay their heads together and decide

that their children shall make a match of it. Unfortunately the young people, who would have liked nothing better if they had been left to themselves, declined altogether to have their affections forced, and break out into open mutiny. Vavra threatens, Tonik defies; Rihova pleads, Lenka snaps her fingers; and matters have come to a hopeless deadlock when there steps in old father Rericha the village diplomatist. He has been watching the failure of authority with sardonic delight, he foretold it from the beginning, but nobody paid any attention to him; now he takes the two mutineers, provokes them first into jealousy, then into recrimination, then into a lovers' quarrel, and finally induces them to plight their troth before they are quite certain that they have been reconciled. For reasons of stage policy, the parents are made unconscious accomplices in the plot; and there is an amusing scene in which Rericha, having lured them into a couple of unjustifiable flirtations, betrays them to the village, and has them denounced by an excited chorus. Of the music there is no need to speak in detail. It is neither great nor meant to be great, but it is all pleasant and tuneful; a stream of wayside melody that appeals the more to us for its lack of pretension. The whole work belongs to the playtime of art: it is a holiday opera, gay, careless and spontaneous, occupying its hour without a dull bar or a perfunctory phrase.

Meanwhile, other forms of composition were not neglected. At the beginning of 1875 appeared a string quartett in A minor; later in the year followed a serenade in E for stringed orchestra, a quintett in G, and, greatest of all, a brilliant symphony in F major. It is probable, too, that we may attribute to

the same period the first pianoforte trio, the first pianoforte quartett, and at least three volumes of small vocal pieces; but in these, as in other of Dvořák's early works, the record is too uncertain to admit of any strict chronological accuracy. He was still a prophet honoured in his own country alone; and his message, though heard with enthusiasm by his people, had not yet been published abroad in the ears of Europe.

However, in 1875, there occurred an event, which not only brought relief to the daily need, but opened as well a wider prospect of fame and fortune. Encouraged by the success of his work at Prague, Dvořák sent in an application to the Pension committee of the Austrian Kultusministerium, submitted an opera and a symphony by way of credentials, and received in answer a grant of some thirty pounds; the first recognition that his genius had won from beyond the border. No doubt to Imperial munificence the amount was an inconsidered trifle; to the organist of St Adalbert's it meant first the equivalent of a year's salary, and secondly the more valuable guerdon of a foothold in Vienna. The judges who had awarded his prize were among the acknowledged leaders of musical art; supported by their authority he could hardly fail to obtain a wider hearing; and if that was once secured the future rested with himself. The frontier had at last been traversed, and before him lay the broad fertile plains that were waiting to be conquered.

To equip himself with a greater freedom, he resigned his post in the year 1876, and began to devote his life almost entirely to the more pressing requirements of composition. It was a bold step, for it left

him with a growing household, and an income chiefly dependent upon his pen ; but like all true artists he had the courage of inspiration, and felt that victory was certain, if he were allowed to maintain his cause with his own weapons. The immediate result was the creation of a masterpiece, which, had he written nothing else, would suffice to rank him among the greatest composers of our time. It may be possible that in the *Stabat Mater* there are a few imperfections, that the sterner qualities are wanting, that some of the phrases are a thought too ingenious and recondite. But its opulence of melody, its warmth of colour, its exquisite beauty of theme and treatment, are far more than enough to condone any real or imaginary defects. With its completion the music of Dvořák passed out of adolescence into the full vigour of maturity and manhood. In its achievement the long years of unsparing labour found at last a befitting reward.

The score was sent off to try its fortune in Vienna, and, by some incredible error, was rejected.¹ Perhaps the judges were afraid of creating a precedent, perhaps they thought that dewdrops of celestial melody should be either invaluable or of no value, in any case they withheld their guineas and added another item to the long catalogue of academic injustice. To Dvořák the loss must have been a serious matter, for he had now no official position, and his pupils had never brought any great accession to his revenue, but with his usual sturdy patience he refused to be disheartened by the mischance, and gathered his forces

¹ See the biographical sketch of Dvořák, by H. E. Krehbiel, *Century*, Sept. 1892.

into winter quarters, there to make preparation for another campaign. After all the disaster was but a temporary check; it could retard his progress, it could cut off his supplies, but it could neither impair his capacity, nor turn the edge of his resolution. He had already gained one success at Vienna: next year it should go hard, but he would match it with a second.

Accordingly, in 1877, he again made appeal to the Kultusministerium, offering in defence of his claim the Moravian duets, and a few of the more recent chamber-works. They arrived at an opportune moment, for Brahms had just been appointed a member of the awarding committee, and, under his guidance, there could no longer be any doubt of its decision. The grant was at once renewed and augmented, the composer was welcomed with cordial and generous commendation; finally the duets were sent off to Simrock, franked by a letter of introduction that was more than enough to secure their acceptance. Back came an answer from the great publishing house at Berlin—the duets should be printed without delay; other manuscripts might be despatched for consideration, in the meantime would Herr Dvořák accept the commission to write a set of characteristic national dances? To such an offer there was only one possible response. Before the close of the year the *Slavische Tänze* were finished; at the beginning of 1878 they were in print, in a few months they had roused the whole of Germany to the appreciation of a neglected genius. Henceforward his reputation was established beyond dispute. Like Byron, he awoke to find himself famous, and to look back upon the times of darkness

and disappointment as a man looks back upon his dreams.

Among the other compositions of 1877 may be noted a set of symphonic variations, and a new comedy, the Cuning Peasant. In the latter Dvořák was again hampered by his uncritical acceptance of a bad libretto. The plot is clumsy and ill-contrived, a medley of cross-purposes entwined at random, and severed in despair; the characters are drawn after a wholly conventional pattern, the humour is for the most part shallow and superficial. When Betuska defies parental tyranny, we all know that she will be rewarded with the suitor that she has chosen for herself. When old Martin lays a trap for the hero, we all know that the comic valet is destined to fall into it. When the count appears as a *diabolus ex machinâ*, anyone can foresee that he will end by blessing the lovers in a fit of stage repentance. And the incident on which the intrigue is made to depend, a twilight scene, with three indistinguishable heroines, forestalls its effect by elaborate preparation, and then only strikes the spectator as an extreme demand upon his credulity. But Dvořák, like Schubert, could 'set a handbill to music.' Out of this unpromising material he has made an opera, which, from overture to finale, sparkles with the merriest tunes, an opera which altogether disregards the impracticable requirements of the dramatist, and goes back openly and frankly to the lyric standpoint. As a play it offers a hundred hostages to criticism, but then it has already been betrayed by a treacherous alliance. As a musical extravaganza it is almost irresistible; brightly written, admirably scored, and charming enough to redeem the most rigorous of pledges.

In spite of its text the opera was so favourably received that Dvořák sent the score to Simrock, who at once printed the overture as a concert piece, and supplemented it later with a German version of the entire work. Indeed, during the next few years, the presses were busy with compositions by the new master, some of them fresh written, some gathered from the great pile of manuscript that had been accumulating since 1861. Day after day was filled with correspondence, with proof correction, with all the numberless details of the printing office: day after day saw another stone added to the structure that had waited so long for its foundation. And, beside this, the bare catalogue of more recent production is in itself a sign of no inconsiderable activity. To 1878 belong the Slavonic Rhapsodies, the serenade for wind, 'cello and contrabass, the bagatellen, the string sestett in A major, the 149th psalm, and a host of smaller pieces; next year came the orchestral suite, and the violin concerto; next year the Legendes, and the violin sonata in F; next year the Stabat Mater and the great D major symphony. Even these are but items in the sum, not indications of its total amount. There is little wonder that Europe should feel itself the richer for a gift so unexpected and so abundant.

But Dvořák could not wholly give up to mankind what was meant, in the first instance, for a patriotic party. The opening of the New Bohemian Theatre in 1881 recalled him from Legends and Rhapsodies into the full stir and impetus of national life, and set him once more in the van of that strange, half-artistic, half-political movement that had found its type and representative in the 'Heirs of the White

Mountain.' The two works which he wrote this year for the stage have almost the tone of manifestoes; curiously alike in scope and plan, curiously different in the measure of their ultimate value. Both make direct appeal to popular sympathy; both recall some notable period in the history of Bohemia; both draw their inspiration from melodies that have gained acceptance among the folk-songs of the people. But here parallel gives way to contrast. The *Husitska* overture, founded on a famous battle-song of the Hussite wars, is a masterpiece which turns to a noble use, one of the finest themes in Bohemian art—the incidental music to Sámboř's 'Tyl,' takes perforce the poor melody of the national anthem, for which Tyl had written the words, and so foredooms itself to failure by a fault that is not its own. Of course in the latter case the choice was inevitable. A drama which had the revolutionary poet for central figure, could only be set by *motifs* that made reference to the best known of his works, and in Bohemia, as in many other countries, the national anthem has been accepted by accident, and maintained by force of association. Still, the comparison of the two results is a lesson of the highest significance. In *Husitska*, Dvořák selected a genuine folk-song, and raised it into a national monument that will stand the test of time. In Tyl he borrowed the tune of a Prague Kapellmeister, and with all ingenuity of treatment, could lift it to no higher level than that of a *pièce d'occasion*. It was perfectly natural that both works alike should obtain an immediate welcome. They appeared at a moment of crisis; they addressed a sentiment of loyalty; they stood for the time outside the range of dispassionate criticism. But to us, who

may regard the matter from a purely artistic standpoint, the difference between them is incalculable. Both are well written ; both have accessory themes of great beauty ; both are scored with all their composer's accustomed skill, but one is built upon the bed-rock of the Bohemian mountains, the other upon an artificial basement that only holds together by external support.

Having once more gained access to the Theatre, Dvořák proceeded to occupy the position, and in 1882 strengthened it by the production of *Dimitrij*, which, among all his operas, is the largest in scale, and the most dramatic in treatment. He had, indeed, a subject made to his hand. The romance of history contains no more striking episode than that of the false Demetrius ; a story of heroism and imposture, of honour in conflict with ambition, of love that betrays a trust, and jealousy that wrecks a life. Marina's character is one of singular interest and complexity, torn between allegiance to her nation and loyalty to her husband, aiding him to usurp the throne which he believes to be his by right, denouncing him in anger when he uses his power against her countrymen, watching his assassination on the spot where she had shared his triumph. Here are no foregone conclusions ; no idle displays of theatrical ingenuity ; no stage lay figures clad in traditional garb ; the whole event is a transcript from nature, vivid, real, convincing, and the more tragic for the cross issue upon which it turns. It may be added that Dvořák has accomplished his part in the work with unusual care and anxiety. After the first performance some important changes were made, notably in the overture, and in the closing scenes, and though the

music has since been printed in its revised form, the composer, still dissatisfied, has recently submitted it to a new process of recension. Yet in its earlier shape the score contained passages and numbers which the world would be the poorer for losing. The most relentless self-criticism could hardly have bettered the entry into Moscow, or Xenia's flight, or the great duet in the second act.

Meantime the curtain was rising upon another scene, which had England for its stage, and Dvořák himself for its hero. As early as 1879, the attention of English musicians had been aroused by a performance of the *Slavische Tänze*; the interest once excited had steadily grown and gathered as new works made their appearance; and, in March 1883, the composer was invited over to conduct his *Stabat Mater* at the Albert Hall. His reception was one of the most cordial ever offered by our land to a foreign artist. The house was crowded and appreciative; the press for once raised a unanimous voice of approbation; the example set by London was soon followed by other great centres throughout the country. No doubt there was something of fashion and novelty in the movement:—every great stream of tendency carries these attendant bubbles upon its surface: but at least the current was set in a right direction, and was destined to maintain its course without swerving. The lapse of years may have brought us a cooler judgment; it has certainly brought us a stronger and more reasoned admiration.

In 1884 the *Stabat Mater* was repeated at Worcester, where it met with so brilliant a success, that Dvořák was at once commissioned to write a cantata

for next year's Birmingham Festival. As libretto he took a Slavonic version of the Lenore legend, a vampyre story, even wilder and more savage than the famous ballad which Burger wrote, and Scott translated. It is not, perhaps, a very satisfactory subject for a long work. There is too much monotony of suffering: there is too much gloom and terror and pain: a tragedy so unrelieved comes near to overstraining the sympathy of the spectator. But for all this it offers certain points of vantage which Dvořák was abundantly qualified to seize. In setting the words, he wisely treated the musical aspect as paramount, brought to the task all his resources of rhythm and harmony and melodic invention, and produced a poem in which horror itself is made beautiful, and darkness lightened with flashes of electric genius. Grant that the 'Spectre's Bride' is too long, that it needs compression; that it loses effect by repetition and redundancy; none the less it can show some of the finest numbers that its composer has ever written, and with such summits attained, may well look down upon any censure of inequality.

A remarkable contrast is afforded by the Oratorio of St Ludmila, which was produced at the Leeds Festival of 1886. The theme is fertile in opportunity, the book is written by the first of living Bohemian poets, the music dates from the centre of Dvořák's richest period, and yet the whole impression left on the hearer is one of failure and disappointment. For this our own reputation is chiefly to blame. It is a matter of common belief abroad, that the only works which can really attract a British audience are the *Elijah* and the *Messiah*; that in them we find all music comprised, that from them we construct a

standard by which we test the entire range of composition. Perhaps our past history in some degree justifies the charge ; perhaps we have unduly favoured the two great masterpieces that were written for our country ; in any case the tradition obtains, and St Ludmila may stand as the most salient example of its effect. The opening chorus is characteristic enough ; the rest is all dominated by the influence of Handel and Mendelssohn ; a labour that is lost by conformity with an alien method, a gift that is marred by the very means taken to render it acceptable.

But during all these years, the best record of Dvořák's genius is to be found in his instrumental compositions. Even the *Spectre's Bride* is not of more account than the *Symphony in D minor*, the *Symphony in G*, and the array of chamber-works that reach their climax with the famous *Pianoforte Quintett*. To these may be added the trifles of a lighter mood—waltzes, mazurkas, dainty little sketches for the pianoforte—all too slight to establish a reputation, but all beautiful enough for its adornment. At the same time he was gaining strength and experience as a song-writer. The *Zigeunerlieder* had already marked a new stage in his lyric method ; they were now followed by three volumes of equal charm and of a style even more fully developed. Indeed, as we look through the pages of successful attainment, we are in no mind to cavil because one effort has missed its mark. Assuredly, there was no lack of power in the artist who could retrieve a single defeat with so many victories.

In 1889 he brought out his sixth opera, *Jakobin*—a sentimental comedy of a type that held the stage some half-century ago. The play is somewhat spoiled

by a double intrigue, of which it may be said that the less prominent strand is the better woven. We grow rather weary of Count Bohus and his peasant-wife ; driven from home by an unbending father, supplanted by a wicked cousin, restored by a reminiscence of early childhood ; but we can all sympathise with the old Kapellmeister who arranges the castle pageants, and who, on the eve of his cantata, has to choose a son-in-law between the burgomaster of the town and its only tenor.

Later events are of too recent a memory to require any detailed description. In 1889, Dvořák was decorated by the Austrian Court ; in 1890 he was admitted to the Honorary Doctorate at Cambridge ; in the same year, Prague elected him Doctor of Philosophy, and appointed him Professor of Composition at the Conservatorium. Next autumn he again visited England, to conduct his Requiem at the Birmingham Festival, and shortly afterwards accepted the post of Musical Director at New York, where, with an occasional holiday in Bohemia, he remained until 1895. During his residence in America he was much attracted by the sweetness and *naïveté* of the negro melodies, and, though he never actually transferred any of them to his own pages, yet in more than one composition he shows clear traces of their influence. This is particularly the case with his symphony, 'From the New World' (Op. 95), so named because it was the first work of his written in the United States, and with the string quartetts in F major (Op. 96) and A flat major (Op. 105). In all these the most conspicuous themes are intimately affected by the 'Plantation Songs,' and it is interesting to note with what skill Dvořák absorbed their character into his own style and method.

Among other notable works published at this period should be mentioned the set of 'Elegies' (Dumky) for pianoforte trio, the three great concert overtures, 'In der Natur,' 'Carnaval,' and 'Otello,' a quintett in E flat minor, and a collection of 'Bible Songs,' the words of which are mainly taken from the Psalms. His last Transatlantic composition was a cantata, 'The American Flag,' written for the Chicago Exhibition of 1895. Shortly afterwards, influenced, it would seem, by sheer nostalgia, he resigned his appointment and returned to Bohemia, where he afterwards resided, partly in Prague and partly in his country house some thirty miles away. His restoration to his own country was marked by another outburst of composition, and in 1896 there appeared the violoncello concerto, the string quartetts in A flat and G, and the three symphonic poems, 'Der Wassermann,' 'Die Mittagshexe,' and 'Das Goldene Spinnrad.' In the same year was published the 'Te Deum,' which had been produced at the Birmingham Festival of 1894, but the work, in spite of some brilliant passages, is not one of his greatest, and needs here no more than the bare mention. After 1896 came an interval of silence, doubtless to be explained by the cares of office at the Prague Conservatorium; then in 1899 followed 'Die Waldtaube,' and 'Heldenlied,' and in 1901 the opera of 'Roussalka.' Another opera, 'Armida,' was produced on March 25th, 1904, at Prague, where, during the spring, was held a National Bohemian Festival with much performances of 'St. Ludmilla,' and other among his compositions. Everything, in short, pointed to a renewal of energy, to a further career of labour and triumph; when suddenly at the end of April he was struck down with an apoplectic seizure, and on May 1st he died, aged sixty-three years.

III

NATIONAL AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE statical conditions which aid in the formation of character may roughly be classified under three principal heads. First, there is the broad general basis of humanity, the common foundation of thought and feeling which enables us to sympathise, in some measure, with distant lands and remote ages. Secondly, there is the individual element, the particular blend of personal characteristics, the special idiosyncrasy that marks the difference between one man and his fellow. Third, and intermediate between the other two, is the debt that we owe to our nation the long inheritance that our forefathers have accumulated, that has been put to interest from the beginning of our race, and augmented by every occurrence in our history. And since art is essentially the outcome of character, it would seem to follow, that the artist should display in his work some trace of these three conditions, that his manner should be affected by causes which belong partly to mankind at large, partly to his own temper and circumstances, partly to the distinctive attributes of his people.

The first two of these have never been called in

question. All criticism admits that art is at once human and personal, that its aim is to particularise, through the medium of the artist, some ideal or truth which is universal in its ultimate essence. But the admission of the national element has been so strenuously attacked, that a few words may perhaps be offered in its defence; and there could be no more fitting occasion than the study of a composer whose best work has been devoted to the service of a national movement. Hence, before beginning any detailed investigation of Dvořák's method, it will be advisable to consider, first, what is precisely implied in the statement that he was influenced by the character of his country, and secondly, whether this influence was a source of strength or of weakness?

Now the differences by which national temperaments are distinguished appear to be such palpable facts, that it is hardly worth while to assert their existence. In conversation, in travel, in all intercourse we are constantly being reminded that Europe is divided by frontier lines, drawn, no doubt, over the surface of a common earth, but for all that, setting up barriers which are not solely geographical. There is some intermixture of races, but it only bars the rule with a rare exception. There is a growing development of breadth and sympathy, but it only teaches us that the foreign standpoint is as good as our own, not that it is the same. The human mind, says Bacon, is a broken and distorted mirror which can but reflect a part of the truth, and assuredly the part reflected by any individual mind is in great measure determined by national and social conditions.

Again the poet, though he be the spokesman of the

whole world, is in a more intimate degree the spokesman of his own country. He has a particular set of traditions for background, he has a particular language for vehicle, and both of these give shape and colour to the abstract ideas which it is his function to express. Wordsworth, for example, is as purely English as Victor Hugo is French or Goethe German; each is the embodiment of a national spirit, each make a closer appeal to his compatriots than to the wisest and most liberal criticism across the border. And this does not depend upon the mere difficulty of translation, it is not a question of grammar and dictionary, rather it is the point of view which seems strange to a foreign reader, which requires some readjustment before the true focus can be obtained. Nor is the discrepancy less in the minuter points of rhythm and versification. The assonances of Calderon are perfectly satisfying to a Spanish ear; to us they have simply the effect of a false rhyme. Alfred de Musset threw French literature into a ferment by ending an Alexandrine with the words 'tu es;' we pass over the line without noting anything unusual in its cadence. In a word, apart from Heine, we shall hardly find an instance of great poetry which is not saturated with a national atmosphere, and even Heine is an exception easily explained, and more easily overstated.

The rule is equally applicable to painting. When Mr Whistler tells us that 'there is no such thing as English art,' and that 'we might as well talk of English mathematics,' we can only suppose that he is experimenting in paradox, at least we may wait for conviction until we have found the counterparts of Reynolds and Gainsborough, of Morland and

Constable. The last of these, indeed, may be taken as a crucial case. There can be no doubt that the Barbizon School was influenced by his method and example, that in some degree it shared his aim and followed his style, yet Constable is as English as the 'Excursion,' Millet as French as the 'Feuilles d'Automne.' The distinctions may be more subtle than those of language, but they are not more unreal. The lines of demarcation may be obscured by imitators and copyists, but they still exist for those who make their art a reality. Even community of school or subject will do very little to obliterate the inherent differences of temper; a man may find his teacher in Paris and his model in Rome, and learn after all that '*cælum non animum mutat.*'

Here an objection occurs. Grant, it will be said, that the representative arts are in some way affected by the *entourage* of the artist, we cannot therefore infer that the same will hold good of music. They are comparatively material and concrete, they depict the actual, they stand in direct relation to an external world, but in music we are dealing with pure abstract form, and the laws of form are universal. Hence the composer is not bound by national limitations; he stands above them, 'he alone with the stars;' he is the citizen of an ideal kingdom where there is one common language and one common scheme of life. To this it is an obvious answer, that music idealises the natural language of emotion, and that if the emotional temper differs in separate countries, the music must differ also. The abstract element is the paramount need of balance and symmetry, but there are a thousand ways in which this requirement can be fulfilled, and the method

selected by any school or country will depend upon its own predilections and its own character. And if the music be true and vital, it will always be found to embody some phase of the national temperament, it will speak with a tone and cadence that are unlike those of neighbouring lands, it will express shades and nuances of feeling which are in some way special to the country that has given it birth.

There is little likelihood that we shall ever be able to reduce these distinctions to phrase and formula, but we may readily observe them by a comparison of the *Volkslieder* that obtain among the different races of Europe. Here we shall find the national idioms in their simplest and most unsophisticated expression, the direct primary utterance of the same ideas, which attain a fuller and more developed beauty at the hands of the great composers. Of course, as the music of a country progresses, it will advance farther and farther from the *Volkslied*, it will grow richer and more complex, it will treat its material by methods which the artist has inherited, not so much from his nation as from his predecessors in the art. Yet it still remains true, that the line of ancestry is continuous, that the course of genealogy may be traced, and that the masterpiece, with all its finish and civilisation, is of the same flesh and blood as its humbler compatriot. Again, there are cases where a composer has naturalised himself in a new home, and has become, in a sense, bilingual; in all these it will be found that the language of his birth holds the predominance, and that his new acquirement is only an added grace. Brahms, for instance, does not treat the Hungarian idiom in the same way as Liszt, or even as Schubert, he

employs it with extraordinary ease and mastery, but he never lets us forget that he is a German.

We may conclude, then, that a composer of genius, if he write simply and naturally, will express his own character, and in so doing will express that of his country as well. More particularly will this be true if he appear during the stir and stress of a patriotic movement, if he be occupied in constructing a system for the guidance and direction of his successors. For a time of political crisis not only brings out all that is best in a man, it also draws him nearer to his people, and makes him at once more desirous and more capable of serving as its true representative. And so it has been with Dvořák. If we compare his melody with that of Smetana, and with that of the Bohemian folk-songs, we shall find a notable resemblance of thought and feeling, they are all of one family, of one kindred, connected by a sympathy that the widest distinctions of treatment cannot annul. No doubt Smetana is often content to reproduce the methods of the folk-song, while in Dvořák the curves are made richer, and the designs more complex and beautiful, still the emotional basis of the one is that of the other, and the distinctions between them depend partly on the personal element, partly on the accident of historical position. Smetana came first into the field; it was his work to gather the stones and to lay the foundation. Dvořák followed him, and began, with the same materials, to raise a super-structure.

Hence it is not a little significant that his few misadventures have always marked some momentary defection from the national cause. The first version of 'King and Collier' has long passed beyond the

reach of criticism, but at least we know that it was written in imitation of Wagner, and that it was unsuccessful. The 149th Psalm is merely a careful and conscientious expression of German method, and has hardly a greater value than that which belongs to an Academic exercise. The Oratorio of St Ludmila is a concession to the supposed requirements of English taste, and in the record of its composer's works it has almost dropped out of account. And if we turn for contrast to such achievements as the Pianoforte Quintett, or the Spectre's Bride, or the D minor Symphony, we are at once struck, not only with the difference of result, but with the total difference of character. Here Dvořák is delivering his own message in his own words, here he attains a native eloquence that can readily compel our attention. It is surely no extreme inference that we should here recognise some connection of cause and effect.

At the same time we must remember that the racial element is only one among formative conditions, and that it is itself a factor in personal idiosyncrasy. 'Just what constitutes special power and genius in a man,' says Matthew Arnold, 'seems often to be his blending with the basis of a national temperament some additional gift or grace not proper to that temperament.' And of this we may find a ready illustration in Dvořák's treatment of the scale, an illustration of double interest, partly because it shows one of the most distinctive attributes in his music, partly because even here he stands in direct relation to an ethnological background. We have already seen that the scale now in use among western nations was set in course by the Florentine revolu-

tion of 1600, and that it spread from Florence to Paris, and from Paris to Leipsic, until it was finally established by Sebastian Bach. Hence the music of Italy, France, and Germany grew with its growth, developed with its development, and constructed by its means a common body of system and tradition. With all their divergencies of emotional impulse, the composers of these three countries have this formal point of union, that they accepted the diatonic scale as their unit, and treated the chromatic rather as an appenage and an extension. From this followed an important consequence. For, in the first place, a settled scale is not only a vehicle for melody, it is also a means of modulation, and this latter function comes more into evidence as music becomes more complex and the need of modulation increases. And, in the second place, it is an essential characteristic of the diatonic scale, that some of its notes should be more nearly related than others, and that composers who found their work upon it should therefore acknowledge some modulations as comparatively easy and natural, some as comparatively remote and recondite. Of course, as time goes on, we become familiarised with effects that once appeared violent and extreme, yet even now we recognise certain relative limitations. Alfio's song in *Cavalleria*, for example, gives us merely the impression of deliberate defiance, it is not construction but demolition, not freedom but revolt.

For obvious historical reasons the growth of this scale system left Bohemia altogether untouched. She did not enter the field until this part of the work was completed, she bore no share in the traditions which its gradual evolutions had established in neighbouring

lands. When therefore she came to the making of her own music, she could look upon this scheme from outside, she could treat it dispassionately, she could take it without any of the limitations that had hitherto marked its course. And in doing so, she produced a result to which the whole history of music affords no exact parallel. Dvořák is the one solitary instance of a composer who adopts the chromatic scale as unit, who regards all notes as equally related. His method is totally different from that of chromatic writers like Grieg and Chopin, for Grieg uses the effects as isolated points of colour, and Chopin embroiders them, mainly as appoggiaturas, on a basis of diatonic harmony. His 'equal temperament' is totally different from that of Bach, for Bach only showed that all the keys could be employed, not that they could be arranged in any chance order or sequence. But to Dvořák the chromatic passages are part of the essential texture, and the most extreme modulations follow as simply and easily as the most obvious. In a word, his work, from this standpoint, is truly a *nuova musica*, developed, like all new departures, from the consequences of past achievement, but none the less turning the stream of tendency into a fresh direction.

It may at once be admitted that from this cause the music of Dvořák loses something of strength and massiveness: that it is Corinthian rather than Doric. But, at the same time, it compensates, at any rate in part, by a certain opulence, a certain splendour and luxury to which few other musicians have attained: and, beside this, its very strangeness constitutes an additional claim upon our interest. We rather lose our bearings when, in the second of the *Legenden*,

we find a phrase which has its treble in G and its tenor in D flat; or when, as in the fifth number of the *Spectre's Bride*, the music passes from one remote key to another with a continuous and facile display of resource that is apparently inexhaustible. Often, too, the devices outmatch the utmost capacity of our recognised symbols. Mendelssohn's famous crux of 'Fes moll' would be plain sailing to a composer who, in his third Pianoforte Trio, writes passages in D flat minor, and B double-flat major, and other keys of a signature equally undecipherable. And though these matters may seem trivial enough when they are submitted to the indignity of our musical nomenclature, we should yet remember that there is nothing trivial in the habit of mind which they imply. It is to them and to their like that we owe all the warmth of colour, all the richness of tone, all the marvellous effects of surprise and crisis that are so eminently characteristic of Dvořák in his best mood. To an imagination so vivid as his, the possession of an extended scale was a priceless opportunity; and he has used it to fill his work with incident and adventure as varied and brilliant as were ever lavished by the hand of Scott or Dumas.

His treatment of the classical forms is much influenced for good by his long and patient study of Beethoven. In the more highly-organised types he certainly falls short of his great master: he lacks the perfect balance that marks the first movement of the *Appassionata* or the A major Symphony; as we should naturally expect, he tends rather to restlessness of tonality and to a page overcrowded with accessory keys. But, in spite of this, his instinct for structure is real and genuine; it ranks higher than

that of Chopin—far higher than that of Liszt or Berlioz; and his outline, though not always in complete symmetry, is firmly drawn and filled with interesting detail. Some of his larger forms are pure experiments in construction: such, for instance, as the opening movement of the Violin Concerto, the Finale of the G major Symphony, and the Scherzo Capriccioso for orchestra: sometimes he founds an entire number on a single melodic phrase, as in the slow movement of the Second Pianoforte Trio: more often, as in the F major Symphony and the String Sestett, he takes the established type and modifies it in some important particular. But whatever the result, his structure always gives us the impression of thought and design. He has his own method, and even when he fails of conviction, he can generally command respect.

The two forms in which he is most successful are the two most usually associated with his name—the Dumka and the Furiant. Both of these are real accessions to musical literature: not because they are new in conception, for, like all other structures, they descend in direct evolution from the folk-song, but because they have developed the primitive type in a new way, and have enriched the existing stock with a strain of collateral relationship. The Furiant is one of the national dances of Bohemia, and is frequently employed by Dvořák as a representative of the scherzo. In adopting it he has, to a great extent, altered its character; he has enlarged its range, quickened its tempo, and replaced, with a more vigorous gaiety and *abandon*, its original tone of half-humorous assurance. If we compare the example in the A major Quintett with the tradi-

tional melody—either as it appears among the Volkslieder, or, as it is used by Smetana in the *Bartered Bride*—we shall see at once that Dvořák has done more than borrow from the existing resources of his countrymen; that, as a matter of fact, he has taken nothing but the mould, and has used it for the casting of an entirely different metal. Even more distinctive is his treatment of the *Dumka* or ‘Elegy,’ a complex form which, like a sonnet-sequence, holds in combination a series of separate poems. It is here, indeed, that he has brought his constructive power to its highest attainment. The whole scheme is of great interest and value: varied without digression, uniform without monotony, flexible enough to answer all moods and engage all sympathies. The stanzas admit a sharper contrast than is possible to the subjects of a ‘sonata movement’: the key system, though it would be impracticable on a larger scale, is admirably suited to these brief moments of concentration: the recurrent themes maintain the organism in proper balance and equipoise. There is little need to speculate on the ancestry of the form, though it is worth noting, that a simple instance occurs in the *Serenade* trio of Beethoven: whatever its origin, it acquires in the hands of Dvořák a special significance which is quite enough to place it among the most notable of his gifts. For illustration, we may turn to the slow movement of the *Pianoforte Quintett*, or to that of the *Third Symphony*, or to the six *Elegies* that have recently been published for pianoforte trio. They are all beautiful, they are all characteristic, and they fill their canvas with a most ingenious diversity of design.

This feeling for colour and movement, which

appears partly in his rhythms, partly in his use of the scale, partly in his preference for lyric and elegiac forms, may also account in some measure for his unquestioned and supreme mastery of orchestration. Here at least there is no counterchange of victory and defeat, no loss in one direction to balance gain in another; here at least every achievement is a triumph and every work a masterpiece. Nor has he alone the lesser gift of writing brilliant dialogue for his instrument, of making each stand out salient and expressive against a background of lower tone; he is even more successful in those combinations of *timbre* which harmonise the separate voices and give to the full chord its peculiar richness and euphony. When we think of his scoring, it is not to recall a horn passage in one work or a flute solo in another—plenty of these could be found, and in a master of less capacity they would be well worth recording—but it is rather the marvellous interplay and texture of the whole that remains in our memory and compels our admiration. Look, for example, at the Husitska Overture, or the third Slavonic Rhapsody, or the slow movement of the Symphony in D minor. Hardly in all musical literature are the orchestral forces treated with such a warmth of imagination or such unerring certainty of judgment.

Hence it is not surprising that a great part of his finest work should be instrumental, and that even his masterpieces of Hymn and Cantata should be written, more or less, upon instrumental lines. He is always rather hampered than aided by the collaboration of the poet; his chromatic style is better suited to strings and wind than to the peculiar limitations of the human voice; his vigorous rhythms are in some

degree impeded by the slower articulation of the words; his sense of form finds its most natural expression in symphonic and concerted music. Again, so far as the distinction is applicable at the present day, he belongs rather to the classical than to the romantic school; he is more concerned with producing the highest beauty of sound than with following, through all its phases, the emotional import of a poem. His operas are for the most part essentially undramatic, and if they hold the stage, will survive as displays of pure melody. His great choral compositions—the *Stabat Mater*, the *Spectre's Bride*, the *Requiem*—stand in a loose relation to the texts on which they are founded; embodying, no doubt, the general tendency of thought, but always acknowledging the melodic requirements as paramount. Even his songs offer no exception to the rule. It is true that, after the *Zigeunerlieder*, they undergo a remarkable change in treatment and elaboration, but although they lose the shape of the ballad, they are never out of touch with its character. Nothing, in short, is further from Dvořák's ideal than the imposition of a programme. He is essentially what the Germans would call an 'absolute musician'; content to express the broad general types of feeling, and, within their limits, wholly engaged with the special service of his art.

This statement requires a word of qualification. The great masters of pure classical style,—Haydn, for example, and Mozart, and Beethoven, have, as their predominant gift, the sense of outline, and their sense of colour, however keen and vivid, is always kept in subservience to the requisitions of design. As a natural consequence, they are supreme in the

string quartett, which, among all types of composition, demands purity of line as its first essential. But with Dvořák, the relation of these attributes is reversed, in him the sense of colour preponderates, and the demands of pure outline, though never disregarded, are nevertheless relegated to the second place. Thus, in his music for strings alone, the Sestett in A, the Quintett in G minor, the four Quartetts, we feel that he is chafing at the restraints of monochrome, that he wants the whole palette, that he is always held in check by the absence of orchestral resources. The result is not that he writes orchestral music for the strings; he is too true an artist to fall into this error; but that he writes string music under difficulties, that he foregoes all the better part of his equipment, that he is accomplishing a task in which his special gifts have little opportunity of display. No doubt these works contain passages and even numbers of great beauty, but as a whole they do not bear comparison with the Violin Concerto or the Symphonies, or the Carnival Overture. Here Dvořák obtains his contrast of tone, here he has the whole gamut of colour at his command, here he can win the full measure of success from which he is in part precluded by a severer method. Yet it would be wrong to class him, for this reason, among the romantic composers. He shares with them one of the most important of their qualities, but he uses it for the furtherance of an end that is different from theirs. The fundamental distinction is one of ideals, and in ideal Dvořák is on the side of the classics.

Hence there is no inconsistency in estimating him by the classical standard. For music is not to be summed up in terms of national language or personal

idiosyncrasy ; these are but the necessary conditions through which is embodied the abstract universal of form. Thus, although a man can only take rank as an artist if he express his own character and that of his people, he is only a great artist in so far as he expresses them in the best possible way. The first spontaneous conception of melody springs from the emotional temperament of the composer, and so marks him at once as a member of his particular nation, its treatment is derived from the intellectual laws of proportion and balance, and so belongs to the general evolution of the art. This distinction appears very clearly in Dvořák's work. His melody, taken by itself, is often as simple and ingenuous as a folk-song, but in polyphony, in thematic development, in all details of contrast and elaboration, his ideal is to organise the rudimentary life, and to advance it into a fuller and more adult maturity. Of course, it cannot be said that he is uniformly successful. He has little sense of economy, little of that fine reticence and control which underlies the most lavish moments of Brahms or Beethoven ; his use of wealth is so prodigal that his generosity is sometimes left with inadequate resources. The stream is so rapid that it has not always time for depth, the eloquence so prompt and unfailing that it does not always stop to select the best word. But, for all this, he is a great genius, true in thought, fertile in imagination, warm and sympathetic in temper of mind. He has borne his part in a national cause, and has thereby won for himself a triumph that will endure. He has enriched his people, and, in so doing, has augmented the treasury of the whole world.

JOHANNES BRAHMS.

The greatest genius is the most indebted man. A poet is no rattlebrain, saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says everything, saying at last something good ; but a heart in unison with his time and country. There is nothing whimsical and fantastic in his production, but sweet and sad earnest, freighted with the weightiest convictions, and pointed with the most determined aim which any man or class knows of in his time.—EMERSON.

Johannes Brahms

I

GROWTH

AMONG the many types of character which are developed by the pursuit of an artistic profession, two stand out salient and extreme:—the artist militant and the artist contemplative. The former looks upon life as a crusade; he proclaims his doctrines to the sound of the trumpet and proves them at the point of the sword: he treats every critic as a traitor, and every adversary as a Paynim and a miscreant: he invades all lands, he challenges all strongholds: he shakes the round earth with the noise of conflict and the shock of contending creeds. The latter is of a far different temper. To him the service of his cause is occupation enough: he is content to produce the best that he knows, and cares little or nothing that others should accept his standpoint: if the work be good he will let it take its chance of appreciation; if men choose to fight about its merits, he will watch the struggle from

his study window as a matter in which he has no personal concern. Nothing is farther from his thought than the establishment of a school or the leadership of a party: like Plato's philosopher, he finds his reward in the pleasures of wisdom, and can leave the pleasures of victory to his self-constituted followers.

Yet the second is not less sure of immortality than the first. For a time, no doubt, the din of battle may drown the quieter accents of the recluse, and the pageantry of war distract attention from the shady groves and alleys of Academe. The world attaches itself more readily to persons than to ideas, and rather resents the imputation that it knows nothing of its greatest men. But there is an inherent vitality in the best work which can no more be starved by neglect than it can be crushed by antagonism. Sooner or later the campaign is brought to a successful issue, and the general returns in triumph through the city gates. Sooner or later the silent truths find voice and audience, and disciples come flocking to the feet of the secluded teacher. Wagner, in a word, has cut his way to fame; Brahms has waited until it set out to seek him.

A life so placid and equable affords of necessity but little material to the biographer. True, there is some record of the early years, some reminiscence of studentship or of the first attempts to formulate and deliver an artistic message, but, the power of utterance once admitted, there is little further to narrate beyond the successive occasions of its exercise. Here, then, is a case in which criticism may concentrate itself from the outset upon the direct development of the artistic gift. The career of a great man is only interesting in so far as it gives fresh insight into his power, or throws

fresh light on the influences that have moulded his character : it is with his work that we are primarily concerned, and, except in relation to this, all details of personal joy and sorrow may be dismissed as irrelevant. Incidents of struggle and mastery, alternations of success and defeat, are worth noting when they occur, since they leave their mark for good or ill on the environment, through which the art itself is affected. But where they are absent we stand face to face with the object of our search, and may contemplate it, not as embodied in circumstance, but as manifested in its own pure nature. And further, the unbroken quietude in which Brahms spent his last thirty-five years may itself suggest a standpoint from which his work can be estimated. He was the deepest thinker in the musical history of our generation, and he had no time to bestow on questions of recognition or reward.

Like his two great forerunners, he was the son of a musician, and was brought up from earliest years to the practice of his art. His father, Johann Jacob Brahms, was a contrabassist in the Hamburg Theatre, who, after having fulfilled the office of Meister der Stadtmusik in his native town of Heide, had come to try his fortunes in the orchestra where Handel had once played second violin. Of his mother little is recorded, except that she was a native of Hamburg, and that her maiden name was Johanna Nissen. Shortly after his marriage, Johann Brahms settled down at No. 60 Speckstrasse, and there, on May 7th, 1833, Johannes was born.

It soon appeared that the boy was possessed of unusual capacity. He learned everything that his father could teach him, he read everything that he could lay his hands on ; he practised with an unde-

viating enthusiasm, he covered reams of paper with counterpoint exercises and variations. At an early age he was sent for further instruction to a young pianoforte-teacher named Cossel, and in 1845, having left his master behind him, he was transferred to Eduard Marxsen of Altona, a composer of considerable merit, whose name has been handed down to us by Schumann's articles in the *Neue Zeitschrift*. There can be no doubt that this was a well-directed choice. In addition to the thorough knowledge of Bach, which had by this time become a staple of musical education in Germany, Marxsen impressed on his pupil the paramount importance of a critical study of Beethoven, and thus laid the foundation of a broader eclecticism than had been attainable by the composers of any previous age. And, as every artist is in some degree influenced by the masterpieces from which he takes his point of departure, it is obvious that the more comprehensive a system of training, the more perfect will be the balance and unity of the ensuing work. Something, of course, must be allowed for temperament and predilection; no course of academic rule would have taught Chopin to write a symphony or make a contrapuntist of Berlioz; but given a mind that is wide enough to be in sympathy with divers methods, we can hardly over-estimate the value of a wise and many-sided *régime*. It is, then, a matter of no small moment that Brahms in his early studies should have followed the historical development of the art: first, the volkslieder and dances which represent its simplest and most unsophisticated utterance; then the choral writing, in which polyphony is brought to its highest perfection; lastly, the culminating majesty of structure which Beethoven

has raised as an imperishable monument. To us at the present day it may seem the most trivial of commonplaces, that a student in music should pay equal attention to all the supreme types of his art; it was not a commonplace half a century ago. And the proof, if proof were needed, is that all the composers of the Romantic period exhibit some imperfection of method: all, no doubt, playing a definite and valuable part in the advancement of their cause, but all leaving untouched some one point of vital importance in the heritage of previous achievement. In saying this, it is not, of course, necessary to set the genius of Brahms in the balance against that of Schumann or Chopin. '*Non facultatum inducitur comparatio sed viæ.*' But the fact remains, that there are in the earlier Masters certain traces of weakness from which the later is wholly free; and of this fact one reason may be found in a contrast between the system of Marxsen and the system of Kuntzsch and Elsner.

Between 1847 and 1849 Brahms was allowed to play at two or three public concerts; but the main part of his work up to 1853 was concentrated on a rigorous course of practice and discipline. His holidays, all too infrequent, were usually spent at Winsen, near Hamburg, where a local patron of the arts, named Adolph Giesemann, offered him the same free hospitality which von Fûrnberg had given to Haydn and the Breunings to Beethoven. Here he regained the strength which he more than once had impaired by overwork, revelling in country air and country pursuits, writing part-songs for the village choral society, and maturing in that atmosphere of simple bourgeois kindness and intimacy which throughout his life he found most congenial.

Meanwhile the revolution of 1848 threw up on the

shores of Hamburg a Hungarian exile of mixed Jewish and German parentage whose father was called Hoffmann, and who called himself Reményi. He was a violinist of somewhat the same character as Paganini, two parts genius to one part charlatan, and his performance of Beethoven's Concerto (March 11, 1848) appears to have been marked as an epoch in the musical history of the town. In 1850 he made the acquaintance of Brahms, who was then acting as accompanist to the Stadt-theater, and shortly afterwards proposed that they should undertake together a concert tour through the principal cities of the neighbourhood. For a time this proposal was vetoed by Marxsen; Brahms was beginning to show a genius for composition with which nothing could be permitted to interfere; and for three years he remained at the desk, justifying his master's decision by the first two pianoforte sonatas, the scherzo in E flat minor, and a number of songs, which included the famous *Liebestreu*. These may be said to stand to his later writings as *Pauline* stands to *Cleon* or *Andrea del Sarto*. There is some wilfulness of phraseology, some occasional harshness of expression, but the beauties are incontestible, and the whole manner astonishingly strong and determined. Already there appear in germ some of his most notable contributions to structural development; already there is evidence that he understood, as one alone had done before him, the full significance of the sonata-form and the possibilities of its further extension. Here at last was a composer who could fulfil Berlioz' boast that he 'had taken up music where Beethoven laid it down.'

In 1853 Marxsen gave his consent, and the ill-matched pair started upon their voyage of adventure. It was, indeed, a comradeship of incongruous elements, and the

boy who had never been further afield than Winsen must have felt a little strange as he set out beside his eager, restless, impetuous companion, who only lamented that his wanderings were confined to a single planet. But the moment was opportune, the chance was too good to be missed, and the journey, auspiciously begun, brought in its train two intimate friendships and the inauguration of a career.

At Celle occurred an accident which indirectly altered the whole aspect of Brahms' position. The piano provided for rehearsal was of a kind picturesquely described by Dr. Schubring as 'ein erbärmlicher Klapperkasten,' which had lost all the voice that it had ever possessed by a long course of convivial dissipation. Accordingly the impresario was summoned, offered the usual apologies, promised to procure a more adequate substitute, and returned at the last minute with an instrument which, on investigation, proved to be a semitone below concert-pitch. It is easy to picture the consternation of Reményi with an expectant audience, a flat piano, and Beethoven's C minor sonata in immediate prospect. To tune his violin down would be little short of a personal outrage, but there seemed no other solution; and he was proceeding with a reluctant hand to slacken his strings when Brahms came to the rescue and offered to transpose the pianoforte part into the higher key. No doubt similar feats have been performed by artists of very different calibre, by a Woelffl as well as a Beethoven, but they have not often been hazarded by a boy at the outset of his career when success might pass unnoticed and failure would throw back all chances of reputation and livelihood. It is little wonder that Reményi required a vast amount of persuasion before he would allow the

attempt to be made, and that he was overwhelmed with astonishment when it was brought to a triumphant issue.

The fame of this exploit smoothed the way of further progress, and the next four concerts, at Lüneberg and Hildesheim, were well attended and heartily received. Fired by success, Reményi determined to strike at higher game, and recollecting that his old schoolfellow Joachim was living at Hanover, turned his steps thither, in hope of an invitation to play before the Court. The event was singularly double-edged. Joachim received his visitors with courtesy which ripened into admiration at the first touch of Brahms' music. 'An altogether exceptional talent for composition,' he wrote to his friend Ehrlich, 'a gift which is further enhanced by the unaffected modesty of his character. His playing, too, gives every presage of a great artistic career—full of fire and energy, yet, if I may say so, inevitable in its precision and certainty of touch. In brief, he is the most considerable musician of the age whom I have ever met.' Every facility was given for the Court concert; there was a cordial invitation to come on to Göttingen (where Joachim was studying theology) as soon as Term began—and then the police intervened. It appeared that Reményi's brother had taken an active part in the revolution of 1848. It was even whispered that the violinist himself had played the rôle of Tyrtæus in the outbreak, and had marched, instrument in hand, at the forefront of an insurgent army. Clearly so dangerous a firebrand could no longer be allowed to imperil the safety of the Hanoverian throne, and accordingly there came a peremptory note from Herr Polizeipräsident Wermuth, followed by a rigorous examination, and a couple of passports for Bückeburg.

In vain Reményi protested that he had no intention of calling his audience to the barricades, that Bückeburg was the last place in the world which he wished to visit, and that he had several other engagements in Hanoverian territory. The sentence of banishment was adamantine, and the utmost concession that could be obtained was an alteration of the *visé* to Weimar.

To the travellers, however, this was a matter of considerable importance. Weimar was the home of Liszt, who at that time was one of the chief potentates of European music. As a patriotic Hungarian he was sure to be interested in Reményi, as a generous and catholic artist he was sure to be interested in Brahms, and it was therefore with some confidence of welcome that, in the beginning of June, the pair presented themselves at the door of the Altenburg. The story of the interview has been left on record by Liszt's pupil, Dr. William Mason.¹ Brahms, who brought a pile of manuscript, was too nervous to play anything in presence of the great man; Liszt took the E flat minor scherzo and, after reading it at sight with the most consummate mastery, proposed to repay it with a composition of his own: selected his last sonata, placed it at the keyboard, and half-way through the performance glanced round to find Brahms dozing in his chair. The whole incident is doubly characteristic. It was the same Brahms who afterwards told the people of Copenhagen that their town hall was worthy of a German capital; it was the same Liszt who, in later life, recalled this episode with the gentle rebuke, 'As you do not like my compositions, I must give a double measure of admiration to yours.'

¹ See Mason's *Memories of a Musical Life*, pp. 127-131. The account here given was told by Dr. Mason to the present writer.

On leaving Weimar Brahms bade adieu to his mercurial companion, and after spending the summer with Joachim at Göttingen set out for Düsseldorf in September, with a letter of introduction to Robert Schumann. The interview between them is one of the most famous in musical history. Schumann listened to the new composer first with interest, then with admiration, then with enthusiasm; he broke his rule of silence to praise 'music the like of which he had never heard before'; finally he issued in the *Neue Zeitschrift* a panegyric that rang through the length and breadth of Germany, and set the whole artistic world upon a strain of attention. In sure and unfaltering accents he proclaimed the advent of a genius in whom the spirit of the age should find its consummation and its fulfilment; a master by whose teaching the broken phrases should grow articulate and the vague aspirations gather into form and substance. The five and twenty years of wandering were over; at last a leader had arisen who should direct the art into 'new paths,' and carry it a stage nearer to its promised land.

The first result of Schumann's encomium was a request from Leipzig that Brahms would go over and play some of his compositions at the Gewandhaus. Accordingly he made his appearance on December 17, gave the sonata in C and the scherzo in E flat minor, and soon, to his great disquietude, found himself in the centre of a raging controversy. There ought, indeed, to have been no dispute in the matter at all. It is notoriously difficult to estimate at a first hearing new work which is possessed of any artistic importance: it becomes almost impossible when the work is not only new but novel, when it stands out of all relation to the accustomed phraseology of its time. The critics, therefore, would have done wisely if they

had been content to reserve judgment, or even to acquiesce in the verdict of Schumann, until they had gained the knowledge requisite for an independent opinion. But to declare that 'Brahms would never become a star of the first magnitude' was, under the circumstances, an extreme presumption, and to wish him 'a speedy deliverance from his over-enthusiastic patrons' was little short of an impertinence. However, if the music was attacked it was also strenuously defended, and, before the winter was out, the publication of no less than eight important works had given opportunity for a more comprehensive survey of their scope and purport.

At the beginning of 1854 occurred the terrible calamity which brought Schumann's career to its sudden and tragic termination, and deprived Brahms at once of his kindest friend and of his most capable adviser. The intimacy had only lasted for some five months, but it had sprung into full maturity on the day of its birth, and had run its brief course in unbroken confidence and affection. It was no relation of master and disciple, no unequal bond of patronage and subservience: from the outset the two men had met on equal terms, united in a companionship which the disparity of their years could not impair. Throughout Schumann's correspondence of the preceding winter, there is scarcely a page that does not bear some reference to the 'young eagle': now a word of counsel, now a good-humoured jest, now a presage of coming reputation. It was a hard chance that severed so close a tie at the very moment when promise was yielding its fruition and prophecy passing into fulfilment.

Throughout the dark days which followed, Brahms was in close relation with Schumann's family, and in the chief compositions of 1854 we may clearly note the

touch of the vanished hand. During the spring he wrote the piano trio in B minor and the variations on a theme of Schumann; in the summer, acting on the memory of his friend's urgent advice, he began a symphony which is of special interest in the history of his career. It was never finished, but the first two movements were shortly afterwards adapted for his first pianoforte concerto, and the third, long withheld, is known to all musicians as the Funeral March of the German Requiem.

The next two years were mainly spent between Leipsic, Hamburg, and Düsseldorf, at the last of which, during the Festival of 1855, Brahms met Hanslick, and laid the foundation of a life-long friendship. The greater part of this time was devoted to an almost unbroken course of study. Hardly any compositions are recorded; there is some mention of a pianoforte quartett, which, on internal evidence, may possibly be identified as that in C minor,¹ but the whole account of it is uncertain, and, in any case, it stands virtually alone. Nothing could be more characteristic of the modesty and earnestness of his character than this period of voluntary retirement. A brilliant success, won at the outset of a career, is usually attended by a natural and obvious danger. The artist has made his mark, he has won for a moment the capricious attention of his public, he has been hailed as an equal by the acknowledged masters of his craft; it is only human that he should strive to keep himself in evidence and set all sail to catch the fitful breeze of popular favour. Add to this every incentive to production which circumstances or capacity can supply, and the result is a temptation

¹ Miss May accepts the identification. The present writer believes the evidence to be inconclusive and the quartett to be of later date, at any rate in its present form. See p. 264.

which the traditional impatience of genius may well find some difficulty in withstanding. But Brahms, then as always, was too self-centred to let his ideal be affected by external conditions. It is possible that the abandonment of his symphony was due to some sense of dissatisfaction; at all events he realised that his equipment was not yet adequate to his purpose, and contentedly postponed further triumphs until he should feel himself more worthy to enjoy them.

The death of Schumann in 1856 brought incidentally a change of surroundings. Madame Schumann was at the time engaged as music-teacher to Fräulein von Meysenbug, sister of the Hofmarschall of Lippe Detmold; and at her request Brahms undertook the office, and, for the next three or four years, transferred himself to the service of the Court. The appointment, which occupied him only during the winter months, put no great strain on his freedom and provided him with opportunities which he readily turned to account. He at once made friends with everybody, with his pupil and her family, with Bargheer the concert-meister, with the virtuosi of the Court band and the singers of the Court capelle, and his periods of residence in their midst were among the happiest of his entire life. We read of him trying feats of strength with Bargheer 'in which he was invariably worsted,' and slyly avenging himself by transposing at the keyboard the pianoforte duets which they played together of an evening; we find him revelling at large in the library—'If you wish to play well,' he said, 'you must read a great many books'—and justifying his aphorism by memorable performances of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart; the Teutoburger-Wald spread its invitation beneath his window, and sometimes tempted him from his desk to a long delicious ramble: it was a time of health and competence and

kindly intercourse; as free from intrigue and diplomacy as from the pressure of material need. The only trouble which clouded its horizon was that in 1857 there came a definite breach with Liszt, and even this was effected with the smallest possible degree of pain or embarrassment. Brahms wrote a manly and dignified letter of withdrawal, frankly stating that he was out of sympathy with the methods and aims of the Weimar School. Liszt took the defection with his accustomed generosity, and never allowed it to embitter their personal relations. This is the more noticeable since the storm raised by *Das Judenthum in der Musik* had hardly subsided, and indiscreet partisans were already putting Brahms forward as their leader against Wagnerian influence.

Shortly after his appointment at Lippe Detmold he wrote the *Variations on a Hungarian Theme*, his earliest essay in an idiom which he afterwards frequently employed; then, after an interval, followed his first two orchestral works, the serenade in D and the pianoforte concerto in D minor. The latter was produced at Hanover on January 22, 1859, and repeated at Leipzig on January 27. On the first occasion it was ill received, on the second it was hissed, and Brahms wrote to Joachim announcing, with rather a sardonic smile, that it had achieved 'a brilliant and complete failure.' He did not overstate the disaster. The *Leipsiger Signale* dismissed the work as a 'Symphony with pianoforte obbligato,' in which the solo part was ungrateful, and the orchestral part 'a series of lacerating discords.' To us, no doubt, it is a matter of surprise that any critic can have overlooked the remarkable beauty of the slow movement; and it is rather hard that while Brahms was being attacked on one side as a conservative adherent of the classical style, he should have been

vilified on the other by the adherents of prescriptive right and convention. However, he bore his defeat with the same equanimity with which he had accepted his past triumphs, and in press of further occupation soon forgot the coil that had been raised around him. To the same year belong the *Ave Maria* and other choruses for female voices, the fine sombre *Begräbnissgesang*, and, best of all, the magnificent piano quartett in G minor which was tried over with Bargheer, Schulze, and Schmit during the winter season at Detmold. It is said that the finale owes some of its inspiration to Joachim's Hungarian concerto, which was produced at Detmold in 1858; in any case the work is one which incontestably ranks its composer among the great masters of the art. Its richness of colour, its vividness of rhythm, its beauty of melodic curve are not more conspicuous than the architectonic supremacy of construction to which the world had seen no parallel since the death of Beethoven. With its inception the genius of Brahms attained its majority, and to the vigour of adolescence added the breadth and experience of manhood.

Early in 1860 he produced at Hamburg his second orchestral serenade, a very graceful and charming composition which deserves a far wider acknowledgment than it has received. For the time it obtained no more than a *succes d'estime*, and an even worse fate attended the serenade in D major which, in a revised form, was played at Hanover on March 3rd. As a matter of fact partisan spirit was growing too strong for dispassionate judgment. For many years the annals of German music had been filled with the agitation of conflict and civil war: on the one side the conservatism of Leipsic and Düsseldorf which ranged itself under the twin banner of Mendelssohn and

Schumann, and which looked to John Sebastian Bach for its ideal; on the other side the extreme romanticism of Liszt and Wagner, spurning all restraint, defying all tradition, and caring less for beauty of style than for vivid and picturesque expression. The old school left the theatre almost untouched, and, in the concert-room, stood by the accustomed principles of symphony, quartett, and sonata; the new school 'turned,' in M. Dannreuther's phrase, 'from the sonata to the characterstück, from the symphony to the poème symphonique,' and flung down its most open challenge in the great performance of *Lohengrin* at Weimar. It is an interesting example of the march of events that Schumann, ever the most dangerous of rebels, should have come to be regarded as the representative of law and order; at any rate his friends and followers were now standing as defenders of classical tradition, and were being assailed with every weapon of invective that the arsenals of romanticism could supply. The contention was so sharp that it even dragged Brahms, for the first and only time of his life, into the arena of public discussion. Aided by Joachim, he drew up a manifesto, which protested in terms of grave censure against 'the so-called Neo-German School'; which disavowed its principles, deplored its practice, and condemned its theories as 'contrary to the very nature of music.' It was a momentary outburst which his biographers must needs regret, but we cannot read the history of the time without realising that it had become necessary to define his position; and the whole tone of the document contrasts very favourably with that of its antagonists. To answer it, as more than one journal did, with accusations of jealousy and self-seeking was tantamount to a confession of defeat. Now that the smoke has rolled away we can see the value of both

causes ; they are no longer enemies but comrades, and in the advancing hosts of musical art they march side by side.

A far more important manifesto was the great sestett in B flat which appeared, together with two books of pianoforte variations, in the autumn of 1860. It was produced by Joachim at Hanover on October 20th, and was the first of Brahms' larger compositions to be received with general and unqualified favour. It is, indeed, a masterpiece about which no question can arise: rich in ideas, powerful in treatment, perfect in balance and proportion; full of subtle devices which it carries so lightly that they sound like impromptus; so firm of texture that it contains no superfluous bar, no unnecessary phrase. At the first hearing it bears us away captive, and we may listen time after time and find in it new beauties to love and new ingenuities to admire.

About this time Brahms resigned his appointment at Lippe Detmold, feeling that even so slight a chain was a hindrance to the freedom of an artistic career, and after spending the winter at Leipsic, returned for a couple of years to his native Hamburg. Here he made his headquarters, conducting a Ladies' Choral Society (for which he wrote an amusing set of burlesque directions), pursuing further studies, and playing frequently at concerts with Joachim and Madame Schumann. In April 1861 he made acquaintance with Stockhausen, who came over to sing at the Hamburg Philharmonic, and at once began for him the fine set of romances from Tieck's *Magelone*, which takes high rank among the best of the early songs. Later in the year he added two more compositions: the set of variations on a theme from one of Handel's harpsichord lessons, and the brilliant pianoforte quartett in A major which

for depth and variety of colour is hardly to be surpassed in the whole record of chamber music. During the same period he wrote a large number of part-songs for the use of his choir: among them two volumes of *Marienlieder*, and one, exquisite in beauty of tone, for female voices, with horn and harp accompaniment; and next year he completed the catalogue of his writings in Germany with a revision of his G minor quartett, and a set of four-hand pianoforte variations on the pathetic melody which had haunted the last sane moments of Schumann's life. By the middle of 1862 he had begun to grow restless. He was now nine and twenty years of age, in the full splendour and maturity of his genius. Hitherto his farthest wanderings had been to Leipzig and Düsseldorf, it was only natural that he should crave for a wider horizon and a more extended range. Possibly an official post might have retained him at Hamburg: in any case his countrymen neglected the opportunity and passed him over. Left free to follow his own bent he turned his face towards Vienna. It was still the capital of European music; it possessed traditions from which any composer might be proud to draw inspiration and stimulus; it contained the most critical public to which any artist of the time could appeal. By September his preparations were made; on the 8th he started on a quest to which, as he says in his letter to Dietrich, he was 'looking forward like a child.' As yet he seems to have had no idea of permanent expatriation, and to have projected no more than such a temporary visit as had been paid by Schumann and Chopin before him. But circumstances decided otherwise; and when, on that autumn morning, he turned his back upon his native city, it was to find a new home where he was destined to live for the remainder of his days.

It may here be convenient to sum up his artistic career at the point where the ways parted and the new life began. The compositions which are known to have been finished by the end of 1862 include the three pianoforte sonatas, five sets of pianoforte variations, two orchestral serenades and a concerto, two pianoforte quartetts, a pianoforte trio and a string sestett, thirty-six songs, including the first book of the *Magelone* romances, two volumes of vocal duets, and a considerable number of choruses for female or mixed choirs. In point of number it is not a very extensive record. At the same age Mozart and Schubert could count their compositions by the hundred, and this careful husbandry appears more than frugal beside their profuse abundance. But Mozart, though he possessed a more lavish stream, was content to let it flow along the accustomed channels; and Schubert's amazing rapidity of improvisation was seldom or never checked by the labour of critical revision. Brahms, all his life through, was essentially a slow worker: the theme, once conceived, was set aside until the appropriate moment came, and was then wrought by strenuous elaboration to its fullest capacity of beauty and significance. Again, he was confronted at the outset with a problem of peculiar difficulty. By temperament, by training, by natural sympathy and predilection, he belonged to the classical school of Bach and Beethoven, the school which laid stress on firmness of outline, on balance of structural form, on a satisfying completeness of polyphonic texture. By the accident of his generation he belonged to an age when the idiom of music was steadily moving away from these ideals, when the natural curve of melodic phrases was growing less suitable to polyphonic treatment, and the emotional and poetic expression were tending to replace by other methods the require-

ments of plot and structure. To put the new wine into the old bottles would have meant sheer and inevitable disaster. To discard the old forms altogether would have meant betrayal of his most cherished ideals. It was therefore necessary that he should proceed at first with gradual and tentative steps, widening bit by bit the constructive system of Beethoven so that, without losing any of its coherence, it might afford scope for the later developments of romance. In this matter Schumann was no doubt the pioneer, but Schumann's counterpoint leaves many questions unsolved, and his structure is more valuable for a few brilliant suggestions than for its contributions to the main point at issue. Brahms, on the contrary, begins upon the bed-rock. His serenade in D, for example, is of the discipleship of Beethoven; indeed, the minuets go back to an even earlier generation. In the pianoforte sonatas—the last great examples of that form which have been written—we can see him striving with an almost obstinate vigour to mould upon classical lines a material which was still inflexible and recalcitrant. Only in the songs does he move as yet with perfect freedom, and of all artistic forms song is obviously the most in sympathy with Romance. Again, it is the tremendous earnestness of these earlier works which gives the fullest presage of the advance beyond them. From the first serenade to the second, from the sonatas to the pianoforte quartetts, from the B major trio to the sestett in B flat there is a progress no less remarkable than that from Goethe's boyish writings to *Egmont* and *Tasso*. Of course the promise is not yet completely fulfilled, it still awaits the advent of *Faust*, but the hand has begun to assert its mastery and the intractible metal to yield obedience.

Up to this point, then, his main problem had been

so to widen the forms of the eighteenth century that they should fit the speech of the nineteenth. And the measure of his achievement may be gauged by two typical examples—the first movement of the B flat sextett and the variations and fugue on a theme of Handel. The former carries out to their logical conclusion the structural principles of Beethoven, and adapts them to a melodic idiom which had been growing and changing through some thirty years of linguistic alteration. The latter makes the very centuries join hands: the variations, wonderfully modern in tone and feeling, never lose touch with the old-world melody from which they spring; the fugue takes its counterpoint direct from Bach, and gives it a new freedom and a new flexibility. Other instances, equally salient, could be selected from the works written between 1859 and 1862; the style is no longer tentative or experimental, no longer hampered by the consciousness of difficulties to overcome, it has for the time solved its problems and surmounted its obstacles. In a word, when Brahms turned his face towards the Austrian capital he had more reason for confidence than any musician who had visited it since the days when Mozart exchanged for its liberty the intolerable servitude of Salzburg. He had won his spurs, he had learned to use his weapons, and he came with a full hand which itself gave promise of further gifts.

II

MATURITY

VIENNA, in 1862, was entering upon its second period of musical activity. After the death of Schubert it had suffered something of a reaction; not, indeed, enough to dim its prestige, but enough to prevent it from making any considerable addition to its record. Now, however, the interval of repose was ended, and for the past few years the city had been gradually rousing itself into fresh energy and fresh achievement. Among its creative musicians could be numbered many names of interest: Robert Volkmann, Saxon by birth, Austrian by residence, a lesser Schumann, whose work had been unjustly eclipsed by his great compatriot; Goldmark, the epigrammatist of the orchestra, brilliant, witty and self-reliant; Bruckner, already completing the foundations on which he has built his strange composite structure of romance and counterpoint; Ignaz Brüll, fresh from the triumph of his first public performance; Johann Strauss, who, like his father, had raised dance music to the level of a fine art, and whose orchestra was still 'worth a journey to Vienna on foot.' Even higher was the standard of executance. There were at least three conductors of the first rank:—Esser at the Opera House, Otto Derzsoff at the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, and Herbeck, recently appointed to an engagement at the Gesell-



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schaft; the chamber concerts of Laub and Hellmesberger had won European reputations: every day one could hear a pianist like Epstein, or a violinist like Grün, or a horn-player like Hans Richter of the Kärnthnerthor, for whose career renown was prophesying a triumphant future. And for criticism, though here, as everywhere, could be found journalists who made up in vociferation what they lacked in knowledge; yet here, as in most places, the mass was leavened by some genuine exponents of sound principle and earnest judgment. Ambros lived close at hand, and could sometimes spare a moment from his historical work to estimate a contemporary; while in the city itself were Grillparzer, who thirty years before had discovered Schumann, and Hanslick, who, though something of a specialist and something of a partisan, has always maintained his standpoint with clear logic and steady conviction.

It was into this assembly that Brahms made his way. As yet his compositions were little known, but there was no musician in Vienna who had not heard his name or felt some expectation at his arrival. Before long, introduction had ripened into acquaintance and acquaintance into a many-sided friendship. Men were glad to welcome a new genius of conspicuous power and encyclopædic knowledge, who never spoke of himself, who never wrote a line in his own defence, who never attacked an opponent or depreciated a rival. Add to this the quiet voice, the undemonstrative manner, the kindly disposition that expended itself in a thousand services, the upright honesty that would never stoop even to conquer, and it is not hard to explain a personal popularity which has lasted unimpaired to the present day. The

artist is too often to be described, in Mr Stevenson's phrase, as 'a man who sows hurry and reaps indigestion,' who 'comes among people swiftly and bitterly to discharge some temper before he returns to work.' It is not a little refreshing to contemplate a genius who, with all the astonishing amount that he accomplished, yet found time to enjoy his dinner, to bear his part in the company of his friends, and to become the sworn ally of all the children in the neighbourhood.

His first public appearance took place at a Hellmesberger concert on November 16, when he played the pianoforte part in his G minor Quartett. From the outset there was no question about his recognition as a pianist; the critics were keen-sighted enough to see that the absence of virtuosity was a merit, and to estimate with full justice the broad masterly musicianship of the interpretation; but at the same time it must be confessed, that the first judgment of his composition was seriously adverse. 'We do not propose,'¹ said the *Blätter für Theater Musik und Kunst*, 'to condemn Herr Brahms altogether until we have heard more of his work, but the present specimen will not induce the Viennese people to accept him as a composer. The first three movements are gloomy, obscure and ill-developed: the last is simply an offence against the laws of style. There is neither precedent nor excuse for introducing into Chamber Music a movement entirely conceived in the measure of a national dance, and it is much to be regretted that Herr Brahms should have departed in this matter from the example set by Beethoven and Schubert.' The criticism is worth quoting as an example of that dogmatic error which is sometimes

¹ Shortened from an article in the issue for November 21, 1862.

allowed to pass current for certainty. It is of course wholly wrong upon the point of fact. Brahms' movement follows in perfectly natural development from the Minuet finales of Haydn, from the Turkish March finale of Mozart, from the 'Alla Tedescas' of Beethoven himself, and even if it did not, even if it were a new departure in detail, a good deal of analysis would be required to show that absence of precedent involved absence of justification.

The composer, however, soon showed that if he had for the moment declined in public estimation, it was only 'pour mieux sauter.' A week later, the Serenade in D was successfully given by the Gesellschaft; on November 29 followed the A major Quartett, far more favourably received than its predecessor; fame, once established, gathered and grew with steady persistence, and at last, in December 1863, opposition itself was silenced by a magnificent performance, under Hellmesberger, of the Sestett in B flat. For once the audience was unanimous; the critics forgot to cavil; even Brahms' old enemy, the *Blätter*, admitted itself convinced, and, in the first flush of enthusiasm, supplied this most rigorous of classical compositions with a romantic programme. 'The opening movement,' it said, 'is a walk in spring when the sky is cloudless and the flowers are blooming in the hedgerows. The second' (*i.e.*, the Air with variations) 'represents a gipsy encampment—dark-eyed maidens whispering secrets, and afar-off the subdued tinkle of the mandolin. The third is a rustic dance; and the fourth—well, we suppose that fourth must mean the journey home.' This is not remarkably conclusive as an exposition of the Sestett, but it appears to have been kindly meant, and, at

any rate, it succeeded in calling public attention to the work, and preparing, in some measure, for a more adequate discussion of its merits.

Meantime Vienna was shaken to its foundations by another inroad. At the end of 1862 Wagner appeared, gave two or three concerts in the course of the winter, and finally established himself at Penzing, where he worked at Meistersinger, and received his friends with his accustomed Oriental hospitality. His relation with Brahms appears to have been always of the slightest. The two composers met occasionally on neutral ground, but they were never intimate, and it was impossible that they should be attracted to each other by any real artistic sympathy. Wagner, indeed, seems to have looked on his great rival as Victor Hugo looked on Corneille and Racine: Brahms, for his part, was content to avow that he did not understand the theatre, and that for him the magic of Walküre and Tristan had no enchantment. It may be that the sense of contrast gave additional point to a famous and frequently-quoted epigram of the younger artist. One day Hanslick was rallying him on his anchorite habits and suggesting marriage as an antidote. 'No,' said Brahms, 'it is as hard to marry as to write an opera. Perhaps—in both—a first success might embolden one to try again; but it wants more courage than mine to make a start.' The mind naturally reverts to an enthusiastic and rather callow reformer, who had once endeavoured to inculcate a short-service system of matrimony in an opera called *Das Liebesverbot*.

Apart from a fine organ fugue in E flat minor, the only compositions published in 1863 were the two Pianoforte Quartetts. This sudden fit of reticence

may possibly be explained by Brahms' appointment in June, to the conductorship of the Vienna Singakademie, a responsible post, which necessitated a good deal of work, and not a little anxiety. It was for this body that he wrote many of his smaller vocal quartetts and choruses, *e.g.*, the *Abendständchen*, the *Vineta*, the *Wechsellied zum Tanze*, and the *Neckereien*, some of which were performed at a 'Brahms' Concert on April 17, 1864, and printed shortly afterwards. At the beginning of May he was unanimously re-elected to his office; but finding, as usual, that he had little taste for either the labour or the rewards of a public position, he resigned in July, and betook himself once more to his study and his proof-sheets. It is worth noting, as an example of the influence of environment, that all the works published during 1864 are vocal. In the spring appeared a setting of the 23d Psalm, then followed four duets for Alto and Baritone, then three choral works and three quartetts, and finally, at the close of the year, two volumes of delightful songs, which end, as a fitting climax, with the immortal melody of 'Wie bist du meine Königin.'

The publications of 1865 include the great piano-forte quintett in F minor, and the first two books of Romances from Tieck's *Magelone*. In March the A major quartett was given at Leipsic, with Madame Schumann at the piano and David to lead the strings; and later in the year, after a long visit to Theodor Kirchner at Zurich, Brahms undertook a concert tour on his own account, and made a triumphant progress through Mannheim, Cologne, where he conducted the D major serenade, Carlsruhe, where he played sonatas with Joachim, and Oldenburg, where, in January 1866, he brought out his new trio for

piano, violin and horn. All this time he was writing with his usual tireless industry, and, in the course of the next few months, saw safely through the press his Variations on a Theme of Paganini, his Sestett in G major, hardly inferior to its more famous predecessor, and his first Violoncello Sonata, a remarkable example of mastery over a very difficult medium.

We may gain an indication of Brahms' growing importance in the artistic world, from the amount of attention bestowed upon him during these years by the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. This journal, ever since Chrysander's occupation of the editorial chair, had gradually won its way to the forefront of German criticism, and from 1863 onwards it treated Brahms with a respect that no other contemporary musician either merited or received. Each of his works in turn was welcomed as an event in musical history, subjected to an exhaustive analysis, often extending over two numbers, and discussed throughout with admirable sympathy and intelligence. Amid our chaos of hasty and ill-considered judgments, it is not a little reassuring to read such articles as that of Chrysander on the F minor Quintett, or that of Deiters on the Sestett in G. There is here no indiscriminate praise, no prejudiced or ill-natured censure, no evasion of the point at issue under a nebulous mist of semi-poetical fancies: from first to last, the critic shows a due reverence for genius and a real attempt to understand the purport of its message. Work such as this, while it justly reacts upon the credit and position of the writer, involves also the recognition of a high value in the object to which it is applied. No great critical essay could ever be written on a poor or trivial theme. The judge may

be as denunciatory as Macaulay, or as humorous as Mr Andrew Lang; he may call to his aid all the Graces of Parnassus, or condemn with all the authority of the Stygian tribunal; but sooner or later the world comes to see that mere denunciation is barren, and that mere banter is ephemeral. The highest criticism, in short, means a judicial estimate of the highest merit, and though the intrinsic worth and splendour of genius can in no way be enhanced by any act of homage, yet it is well, both for genius and the world at large, that the act of homage should sometimes be rightly and adequately performed.

In October 1866, Brahms made a short concert-tour in German Switzerland, with Joachim for companion. The pair visited Schaffhausen, Winterthur, and Zurich, playing everywhere to enthusiastic audiences, but meeting with no adventure worth recording. The days of flat pianos and officious superintendents had long gone by, and in the path of two such artists there were no longer any obstacles to retard progress, or arouse reminiscence. At the end of November they separated; Joachim to fulfil an engagement in Paris; Brahms to return for the usual winter season in Vienna, where, in January 1867, Hellmesberger led the first performance of the *G major Sestett*. It is no discredit either to composer or to audience that the new work was received with more astonishment than delight. The extremely elaborate polyphony, which is one of its distinguishing attributes, is probably too intricate to be comprehended by anyone at a single presentation, and we may infer that the public actually did not hear the melodies for the simple reason of

their abundance. The complaint of tunelessness which has been brought against every great composer in turn, usually emanates from a criticism that cannot see the wood for the trees, and on this occasion it may be noted that Vienna saved its repute by wisely reserving judgment; and that Brahms' only repartee was to publish forthwith a delightful set of four-hand waltzes, in which the top part had the tune and the other parts had the accompaniment, and everybody was satisfied.

In March and April, he gave a couple of pianoforte recitals, at which, as usual, his own works were very sparsely represented. It was at the former of them, by the way, that he brought out his Paganini Variations, and, on being enthusiastically recalled, played the Finale of Beethoven's third Rasoumoffsky Quartett as an encore. Towards the end of April came two concerts at Pesth, and in the early summer appeared a fine set of part-songs for male voices, usually known by the title of Soldatenlieder. But the great musical achievement of the year was the German Requiem, of which the original six numbers, written, it is said, as a monument for the Austro-Prussian War, seem to have been completed by November. A seventh movement, the exquisite soprano solo, with choral interludes, was inserted next year in commemoration of a more intimate and personal sorrow.

As a preliminary, the first half of the Requiem was given at a Gesellschaft concert on December 1, and at once visited with a storm of Theological criticism. It was not a Requiem, said the purists; it was not even ecclesiastical in tone; it was a sacred cantata, far less suited to the church than to the concert-room. Even its defenders looked upon it with some mis-

giving, and could only plead that it was 'confessionslos aber nicht religionslos.' Now and then the controversy diverged as on a side issue to consider the music and discuss its relation to Bach and Beethoven, but, for the most part, critics seem to have been occupied in pointing out the impropriety of the name, and raising the equally important objection that there is nothing distinctively 'German' in the sentiment of the words. However, the world soon had an opportunity of judging the matter from a more appropriate standpoint. On Good Friday, 1868, the entire six numbers were performed in the Great Church at Bremen, to an audience of over two thousand people, including Joachim, Dietrich, Max Bruch and Madame Schumann. Representative musicians came from Austria, from Germany, from Switzerland, from England itself, and the impression that they carried away with them has steadily gathered and developed into a reverence that is almost too deep for praise. Grant that there are some genuine lovers of Music who find the Requiem an unequal composition, which only means that to them it makes an unequal appeal; the fact remains that there is nothing in the whole work, unless it be the difficulty of execution, against which any objective criticism can be directed. 'You cannot touch them,' said Heine of some disputed passages in Faust, 'it is the finger of Goethe.' And as the faults are imaginary, so the beauties are incontestable. If there be any man who can listen unmoved to the majestic funeral march, to the serene and perfect melody of the fourth chorus, to the two great fugues, which may almost be said to succeed where Beethoven has failed, then he can

only conclude that he stands as yet outside the precincts of the art. It is no more a matter for controversy than are the poetic merits of the *Antigone* or the *Inferno*. We are not here dealing with a product of the second order, in which blemishes are to be condoned and qualities set in antithesis, and the whole appraised by a nice adjustment of the balance. To find a defect here, is to criticise our own judgment, and to stigmatise as imperfect not the voice that speaks but the ear that listens.

The summer of 1868 was spent at Bonn, partly in preparing the German Requiem for the press, partly in strenuous composition. The only other works published during this year, were five volumes of songs (Op. 43 and Ops. 46 to 49),¹ but it seems pretty certain that *Rinaldo* and the *Rhapsodie* from Goethe's *Harzreise* were written at the same time, and we may probably add the first set of *Liebeslieder Waltzes* for pianoforte duet, with vocal accompaniment, which appeared early in 1869. Of the songs, it is only necessary to say, that they include *Von ewiger Liebe*, *Botschaft*, *Herbstgefühl*, *An ein Veilchen*, and the *Wiegenlied*; the two cantatas have long established their position as the finest male-voice choruses in existence; and the *Liebeslieder*, though naturally conceived in a lighter mood, are as dainty as Strauss and as melodious as Schubert. Finally, there is some slight internal evidence for assigning to 1868, at least one of the two string quartetts which were printed a few years later as

¹ To them should be added the last three books of *Romances* from Tieck's *Magelone*, which were not printed until 1868, though they were almost certainly written some considerable time earlier,

Op. 51. In any case, whether this assignment be correct or not, the year's record is one which would do honour to any artist in musical history.

After this period of vigorous activity there followed two years of almost entire repose. In 1869, a couple of concert tours were projected—one in Holland and one in Russia, but the plans were abandoned almost as soon as conceived, and meanwhile the only fresh publications were the first two books of Hungarian dances, which, by an odd irony of fate, have come to be more intimately associated with Brahms' name than almost any of his own compositions. It is no longer requisite to point out that the melodies of all the dances are of national origin; one alone (the graceful little *Csárdás*, in A major) being traditional, and the rest, written by Rizner, Kéler Béla, and other 'popular' Hungarian composers. But it is worth noting, as an illustration of critical method, that more than one journal of the time disregarded the specific announcement on the title-page, and accused Brahms of plagiarising the tunes which he only claimed to have arranged in duet form. Of course, the accusation broke down, but equally, of course, it ought never to have been made.

It may be remembered that, in 1859, Brahms had emerged from his second period of studentship with a Pianoforte Concerto in D minor, which at the time was received with considerable disfavour by its Leipsic audience. The work had been printed in 1861, and had slept ever since on the shelves of Rieter-Biedermann, waiting in patience until the public was ready to appreciate it. Now it seemed as though the hour had come. The world was wiser by

the experience of a dozen years; the composer was no longer a *débutant* to be sacrificed on the altar of critical conservatism; Vienna had shown herself disposed to listen with sympathy and intelligence. Accordingly the work was recalled from its obscurity, presented at a Philharmonic concert on January 20, 1871, and, it is pleasant to add, received with acclamation. No doubt the critics repeated their old joke, that it was a 'symphony with pianoforte obbligato,' but the attention with which it was heard, and the applause with which it was welcomed, gave sufficient evidence that the interval of education had not been fruitless. 'It is,' says Dr Helm, writing to the *Academy*, 'the most original production of its composer, except the Requiem, and the most genial composition of its kind since the days of Beethoven. Perhaps 'genial' is not precisely the epithet that we should most naturally employ, but when a victory is announced it is ungracious to carp at the terms of the bulletin.

In 1871 appeared two new works of considerable importance. First came the *Triumphlied*, written to commemorate the victories of the Franco-Prussian war, and produced, together with the Requiem, at a solemn Good-Friday service in Bremen Cathedral; then, a few months later, there followed at Carlsruhe, what is perhaps the most widely-loved of all Brahms' compositions, the exquisite and flawless setting of Holderlein's *Schicksalslied*. It was only natural that the former should rouse some criticism in the French papers, which were still chafing at the foolish humours of *Eine Kapitulation*. The shout of victory however noble and dignified its expression, is always a little discordant to the vanquished and we may

almost sympathise with the *Gazette Musicale*, which ended its review by remarking, in a tone of grave irony, 'Et M. Brahms, l'auteur du Triumphlied, est né à Vienne, près Sadowa.'

Of the Schicksalslied, it is hard to speak without incurring some charge of extravagance. Perfection is a word of such serious meaning, and of such loose and careless employment, that a writer may well hesitate to apply it, even if there be no lighter one that is adequate to the case. Yet, on the other hand, it is difficult to see how, in the present instance, any hesitation is possible. The work deals with the most tremendous of all contrasts:—the pure, untroubled serenity of Heaven, the agonies and failures of a baffled humanity, the message of peace, tender, pitying, consolatory, which returns at last to veil the wreck of man's broken aspirations; and to say that the treatment is worthy of such a theme, is to announce a masterpiece that has as little to fear from our criticism as it has to gain from our praise. It is almost superfluous that one should commend the more technical beauties: the rounded symmetry of balance and design, the pellucid clearness of style, the sweetness and charm of melody, the marvellous cadences where chord melts into chord as colour melts into colour at the sunset. If it be the function of the artist that he be 'faithful to loveliness,' then here at least is a loyalty that has kept its faith unsullied.

After such a climax, it was almost inevitable that there should follow a period of reaction, and in 1872 no new compositions made their appearance. As a subsidiary cause we may note that, in the summer of this year, Brahms accepted the important post of conductor to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. His

tenure of office, which lasted until 1875, is marked by the very noticeable frequency of Handel's name in the programmes of the Society. It has become so much the fashion to regard our admiration for Handel as a peculiarly British error, that we may well feel some relief at finding it shared by the greatest and most essentially German of recent musicians. *Saul*, *Solomon*, *Alexander's Feast*, the *Dettingen Te Deum*, and the Organ Concerto in D minor, were all presented in the course of the next two seasons,—a remarkable record, if we remember that a season consisted of six concerts, and that the range of selection extended from Johann Rudolph Ahle to Rubinstein and Goldmark.

Once established in his new position, Brahms found no further difficulty in reconciling its duties with the needs of his own productive activity. During the years 1873-5 he poured out a continuous stream of new works, including not only many songs, duets, and choruses, but the *Neue Liebeslieder*, the fine set of orchestral variations on a Theme of Haydn, and the Pianoforte Quartett in C minor, which, although it suffers from an almost inevitable comparison, may yet be said to contain two of the most delightful melodies that its composer has ever written. It was in this last work that some candid friend pointed out an obvious structural resemblance to the Finale of Mendelssohn's C minor Trio, and was met with the placid, if somewhat direct rejoinder, 'Das sieht jeder Narr.' Brahms does not belong to the artistic type that can be readily stirred by an accusation of plagiarism.

Such an accusation, however, was shortly to be repeated in more vehement terms. At the beginning

of November 1876, the Symphony in C minor was played (from MSS.) at Carlsruhe, and at once attracted a great deal of attention, not only because it was the composer's first work in this form, but for the less satisfactory reason that its Finale is based on a melody curiously similar to that of Beethoven's 'Freude.' To make matters worse, an enthusiastic Hamburg admirer labelled the new composition 'A Tenth Symphony,' and so emphasised the resemblance in a manner which would have been hardly possible to an open antagonism. The artistic importance of this question will be considered later: at present it is enough to note, that the resemblance undoubtedly exists, and that it holds a prominent place in almost all the contemporary criticisms. Yet, on the whole, the Symphony was favourably received. The first movement aroused some controversy:—'We cannot make head or tail of it,' said a Munich correspondent, 'so we suppose that it is a Symphonic Poem;'—but the Andante, the Allegretto, and even the offending Finale, appear to have met with a due share of popular favour. It must be remembered that the opening Allegro is essentially tragic in character, and that, with the general public, tragedy takes longer than comedy to win its way.

As the publication of the Requiem had been followed immediately by a great outburst of choral works, so that of the first Symphony stimulated Brahms to further attempts in the great epic forms of the orchestra. In December 1877, the D major Symphony was produced by Richter at a Philharmonic concert in Vienna, and in 1878, after a short holiday tour in Italy, Brahms completed the triptych

with his superb violin concerto, second only, in the record of musical art, to that of Beethoven. The *début* of this last composition, which took place on January 14, 1879, was characterised by a very unusual mark of respect and interest. Not only was it received with a cordial ovation — when Joachim is playing Brahms that is only to be expected—but at the close of the concert a large part of the audience remained in the hall, and constituted itself into an impromptu debating society to discuss its impressions. This forms a remarkable contrast to the panic flight which usually follows on the first moment of liberation, and must be taken as the sign and witness of a more than superficial enthusiasm. Men may applaud from good-nature, from impulse, from a desire to be in the fashion; but something stronger than this is required to keep them in their seats after the performance is over.

Meantime works of less extensive compass were appearing in their usual copious abundance. In 1876 came the bright genial quartett in B flat, then followed a series of songs, duets and pianoforte pieces, then a couple of motets for mixed chorus and orchestra. In November 1879 the violin sonata in G was given for the first time at a Hellmesberger Concert, and succeeded almost immediately by the two well-known Rhapsodies for piano solo, and the second set of Hungarian dances. Of course, fertility is not in itself a mark of genius—otherwise Raff would be the greatest composer of the century—but at least it gives additional opportunity for the marks of genius to appear. And it may be added that, even in the periods of most rapid production,

Brahms hardly ever shows any signs of haste. If he escapes the self-torture which drove Chopin day after day to the revision of a single page, it is not because his ideal is lower, but because his judgment is more robust.

In 1880 he accepted the degree of Doctor in Philosophy, offered him by the University of Breslau, and at once set himself, during a summer stay at Ischl, to write his thesis. A ceremonial of so solemn and academic a character naturally demanded an unusual display of learning. Symphonies were too trivial, oratorios were too slight, even an eight-part *à capella* chorus in octuple counterpoint was hardly adequate to the dignity of the occasion. Something must be done to mark the doctorate with all the awe and reverence due to the Philosophic Chair. So Brahms selected a handful of the more convivial student songs—‘Was kommt dort von der Höh’, ‘Gaudeamus igitur,’ and the like—and worked them into a concert overture, which remains one of the most amusing pieces of pure comedy in the whole range of music. It was an audacious experiment, and one which could only have succeeded in Germany. Not even Brahms could offer, as a Doctor’s exercise at Oxford or Cambridge, a work based on the melodies with which our own studious youth beguiles its leisure moments.

Two other compositions appear to have been written at Ischl during the same summer—the Tragic Overture and the Pianoforte Trio in C major. Of these the Trio remained for some time in abeyance; the Overture, together with its ‘Academic’ companion, was produced at Breslau on January 4, 1881, and repeated at Leipsic on January 13. It

is equally intelligible that the lighter mood should have won a more immediate sympathy, and that a mature decision should have reversed the verdict. In the Academic Overture men met old friends, cracked old jokes, recalled old memories of the Kneipe, and so rather put themselves out of court for dispassionate criticism: the Tragic brought them nothing but a cheerless vision of crumbling steeps and mysterious shadows, of dark recesses and haunted glades, of

‘ Moonlit battlements and towers decayed by time,’

through all of which we can fancy Vetter Michel passing with his coat tightly buttoned and his hat pressed over his brows, only anxious to escape as soon as possible from the enchanted spot, and return to warmth and light and good fellowship. At the same time, the Tragic Overture strikes a deeper note, and though it is not more masterly in structure, is certainly more poetic in conception. Besides, it owed no factitious interest to the particular circumstances of its first appearance, and so, having been treated from the beginning on its own merits, it is the more likely to endure.

Other events of 1881 may be dismissed in a few words. At the end of January the London Philharmonic endeavoured to secure Brahms as conductor for its coming season; but the offer, like all subsequent invitations from this country, was immediately declined. ‘*Je ne veux pas faire le spectacle,*’ is the reason which was once given as the ground of refusal; and, though we may feel a little mortified at the implication, it is difficult to deny the uncomplimentary

truth that it contains. We have not yet learned to treat genius frankly, and either starve it with censure or smother it with an irrational excess of enthusiasm. And further, Brahms was much occupied during the summer, partly in preparing his two overtures for the press, partly in completing the *Nänie* and the new Pianoforte Concerto in B flat. During the autumn came a concert tour of unusual extent, in which the last-named work was produced at Buda-Pesth, and repeated at Meiningen, Stuttgart, Basle, Zurich, and ultimately at Vienna. By this time it had become an article of faith, that Brahms' concerti showed no claim to their specific title; and, as the jest of 'Symphony with pianoforte obbligato' had fulfilled its purpose, the critics struck out a fresh line, and described the new work as 'chamber music on a larger canvas.' However, the Viennese public was as indifferent to names as Juliet herself, and received the music with a cordiality that took no thought of problems in scientific classification.

The publications of 1882 consist of four volumes of songs, which range in character from the humour of the *Vergebliches Ständchen* to the poetry, as pure and contemplative as Wordsworth, of *Feldeinsamkeit* and *Sommerabend*. After the Vienna season Brahms took his usual holiday at Ischl, and there composed the String Quintett in F and the *Gesang der Parzen*, both of which were printed in the succeeding year. But the next real landmark was the third Symphony produced at Vienna in the winter of 1883, and repeated at once in almost every great musical centre in Germany. It is perhaps the finest, certainly the clearest, of all Brahms' instrumental compositions for orchestra—forcible and vigorous in movement, delight-

ful in melody, and, of course, faultless in construction. 'Now at last,' said a member of the Viennese audience, 'I can understand Brahms at a first hearing': and, indeed, it must be a cloudy twilight in which so exact a hand cannot be readily deciphered. In strong contrast is the fourth Symphony in E minor, which followed after another period of song-writing. On grounds of true artistic value, it is almost equal to its predecessor; but it deals with more recondite themes, it traces more involved issues, and it has consequently been treated with some of that irrational impatience which is the common fate of prophets who speak in parables. When it was presented at Leipsic in 1886, the critics protested against it as wholly unintelligible; and when Reinecke repeated it at the beginning of the next year, the audience trooped out after the third movement and left the finale to be played to empty benches. It may be remembered that the subscribers to *Fraser's Magazine* once threatened to withdraw their patronage unless the editor discontinued a far-rago of exasperating nonsense called by the unmeaning name of *Sartor Resartus*.

In 1887 Brahms was created a Knight of the German order, 'pour le mérite,' in company with Professor Treitschke, Gustav Freitag, and Verdi. He had already received the order of 'Arts and Sciences' from the King of Bavaria; and, two years later, he was admitted by the Emperor of Austria to the order of St Leopold—the first civilian, it is said, on whom that distinction has been conferred. Meantime, he brought his list of works past its hundredth opus number—that goal which Schubert was so pathetically anxious to reach—with the 'Cello Sonata in F, the Violin Sonata in A, the double Concerto and the

C minor Pianoforte Trio. The first of these, which was produced by Hausmann in November 1886, at once aroused a very curious outburst of structural criticism. It was said, and the statement is still repeated, that Brahms had been guilty of a dangerous and radical innovation in choosing for his slow movement a key removed by only one semitone from that of the work as a whole. The choice was too near in pitch, it was too remote in signature, it broke the harmonic unity of the composition by a contrast of colour which was in itself glaring and extreme. But of attacks on Brahms, as of attacks on a very different master, we may generally say, '*ça porte malheur.*' The so-called 'innovation,' authoritatively condemned as without parallel in musical literature, may be found in one of Haydn's pianoforte sonatas, and can hardly, therefore, be criticised at the present day as hazardous and revolutionary. Whether the contrast be here successful or not is a matter on which opinions may conceivably differ, though, after any serious study of the opening movement, they are likely to concur; but it is surely unfair to accuse Brahms of violating the classical tradition, unless, indeed, there be a sense in which any stage of evolution may be said to violate its forerunner.

In the summer of 1889 Brahms was presented with the freedom of the city of Hamburg, a gift which affected him more deeply than any splendour of royal or academic distinction. With its acceptance his public life may be said to close. He was now fifty-seven; he had spent nearly forty years of strenuous and honourable work; his dislike of notoriety grew naturally keener with advancing age; he had no longer any office or appointment

to call him from his beloved seclusion. The occurrences of the next seven years may be summed up in a few rare concert-tours or holiday visits. For the rest he lived among his books; reading, editing, annotating until the creative moment came, and the world was made richer by a new masterpiece. Within this period he produced about a score of compositions: an exquisite violin sonata in D minor; a second string quintett, even sweeter and more melodious than the first; two volumes of motets, strong, stately and dignified; two concerted works for clarinet, of which one at least may rank among the chief glories of musical art, and a whole underwood of songs and pianoforte pieces, that grow and blossom in the shadow of the larger forest. But even the records of achievement become more sparse as the years decline. The evening was at hand, and the day's work drawing to its close.

It was in the summer of 1896 that he printed his last composition, the *Vier ernste Gesänge*. For some little time his health had been giving cause for anxiety. In the autumn his doctors sent him to Carlsbad in hope of a cure; then in the early winter appeared symptoms of some cancerous growth, and the only hope left was for the alleviation of pain. Yet a few more months he lingered, bearing his death sentence with the same unselfish fortitude that had marked his life, until on April 3, 1897, the end came and the sufferings were over. With him passed away one of the noblest figures in all musical history: a great man, generous and upright, without envy, without arrogance, free from all taint of the meaner emotions, wholly single-hearted in the service of his ideal. The happiness which

eludes all conscious human pursuit came to him unasked and unsought; the rewards that he would never stretch a hand to seize offered themselves for his acceptance. His life was secure from sordid anxieties, unvexed by the contests and intrigues that have so often marred an artistic reputation, rich in the love of friends and the priceless gift of genius. It is not for him that we should mourn, now that in the fulness of years and honours he has laid his books aside and turned to sleep.

III

THE DIRECTION OF THE NEW PATHS

AS Music is the most abstract of the arts, so it is also the most continuous. In each successive generation the Poet and the Painter are confronted by approximately the same facts of nature and life : the truth of representation which forms an essential part of their work is relative to an external model which is comparatively unchanging. Thus, in a certain degree, every age of representative art stands on a level with its predecessors, and however much it is influenced by traditions of style, is even more affected by its direct relation to physical realities. Music, on the other hand, is simply the gradual mastery of a particular medium by the pure action of the human mind. Its actual method contains no concrete element at all, and in it, therefore, every generation must take its point of departure, not from the same universe which appealed to previous artists, but from the actual achievement which previous artists have handed down. The Greeks were as keenly alive to the beauty of music as to that of poetry : to us their poetry is a delight and their music a bewilderment. To the Italians of the great artistic period, the charm of music was as vivid as that of painting ; to

us their painting is almost a finality, and their music, even in Palestrina, but the supreme expression of a transitory phase. And this is not because music is in any sense the youngest of the arts: for such a theory is refuted by the most casual survey of human history. The real reason would seem to be, that in the representative arts we have a series of comparatively independent periods, each manifesting afresh the attitude of an artistic mind to a fixed world of nature: whereas, in music, the periods are stages of a continuous evolution, and the whole environment of the artist is summed up in the inheritance that he derives from the past.

This distinction must, of course, be stated not as absolute, but as relative. For, in the first place, every work of art is the outcome of its creator's personality, and depends, therefore, on the particular attributes of his character and temperament. Poetry, like the poet, is born, not made: painting, even if it borrow its model from nature, must find its power of vision in the soul of the artist: and music, in like manner, is worth nothing unless it arises from a true and spontaneous emotion. The gift of melody, the sense of ideal beauty, the capacity for genuine and noble feeling, are qualities which cannot be learned or communicated: they constitute the life of the art, and external forces can only influence its training. Further, it is idle to speak of the 'representative' artists as unaffected by the general course of æsthetic history. Only, it is here contended, that their debt to the past is appreciably less than that of the musician, because their debt to the present is appreciably greater.

It is impossible, then, to estimate a composer with-

out special reference to his historical conditions. For the whole of his work consists in expressing thought, which he originates through a medium which he inherits, and, to gauge his success, we must know how the art stood before it passed into his hands, and to what extent he has enriched or augmented its resources. There are, therefore, two questions, and only two, to which musical criticism can address itself: first, whether the feeling implied by the work is one that commands our sympathy: second, whether in expressing it the artist has assimilated all that is best in a previous tradition, and has himself advanced that tradition towards a fuller and more perfect development. And, as the former of these questions is the more difficult of the two, we may perhaps defer it until the latter has received some share of consideration.

Now, the primary fact in music is the simple melodic phrase: the spontaneous, almost unconscious, utterance of an emotional state that is too vivid for ordinary speech. At first, this music is entirely artless, for art only begins when the medium is recognised as possessing an intrinsic interest; then there gradually arises an attempt to make the phrases more coherent, and so more expressive, until the first landmark is reached in the establishment of a definite scale-system like that of Greece. Thus Greek music may be taken as the lowest stage of organisation in the European history of the art. It was not unscientific, for it had the modes, with their elaborate subtleties of diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic, but we may search its records in vain for any distinctive recognition of musical form. Its effect, to judge from the allusions in Plato and Aristotle, seems to

have been wholly emotional, and its intellectual basis was not artistic but mathematical in character.

The Greek modes were revised by Claudius Ptolemy, and on the basis of his revisions was established the system of the mediæval church. In it the claims of the medium began to receive further attention, and the next step was the gradual elaboration of counterpoint, that is, the combination of simultaneous voice parts, each independent, but all conducing to a result of uniform and coherent texture. Starting from the crude origins of descant and faux-bourdon, the new method steadily grew and developed, through Dunstable, Dufay, Josquin, and a host of other great writers, until it reached the second universal landmark in the magnificent climax of Palestrina. If the ecclesiastical modes had been final, music would never have advanced beyond the 'Missa Papæ Marcelli,' and the 'Æterna Christi Munera.'

But the modes were not final. For certain scientific reasons, into which it is here needless to enter, they were incapable either of a common tonality or of a coherent system of modulation. Hence, while the organisation of harmony could be carried by the ecclesiastical composers to a high degree of perfection, the organisation of key lay outside their horizon altogether. And while they were busy, like the schoolmen, in 'applying a method received on authority to a matter received on authority,' the unrecognised popular musicians, who had never heard of Ptolemy, and cared nothing about counterpoint, were writing tunes in which our modern scale-system begins to make a tentative and hesitating appearance. It is not too much to say that the dances collected in Arbeau's *Orchesographie* come nearer to our sense

of tonality than all the masses and madrigals that contemporary learning could produce. In a word, the growth of harmony belongs to the Church, the growth of key to the people.

Then came the most important dynamic change in all musical history: the Florentine revolution of 1600. Its ostensible object was frankly dramatic—the revival of Greek tragedy under such altered conditions as were implied by the change of language and civilisation: its real importance was that it destroyed the convention of the modes, and called tonality from the country fair to the theatre and the concert-room. For a while, no doubt, the dramatic ideal overpowered everything else, and even the Church left off writing masses and took to oratorios instead; but when pure music reasserted itself, it found an entirely new set of problems waiting for solution. Harmony had to be organised, not on the basis of the mode, but on the basis of the modern scale, and thus had to take into account a question of key-relationship which had never fallen within the scope of the ecclesiastical period. And hence followed a line of development beginning about the time of the younger Gabrieli, and passing through the great choral composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries until the third landmark of our musical history was attained in the person of John Sebastian Bach. His polyphony, as applied to the emotional expression of his time, is simply the best of which the art of music is capable. Given the phrases which he employed as subjects, the human mind cannot conceive their being treated with a more complete harmonic perfection.

Meantime, ever since the floodgates had been

opened by the audacious hand of Florentine amateurs, another and more copious stream of tendency had been flowing along a separate channel. The new tonality had not only made a great difference in the harmonic aspect of music, it had virtually opened a new field by suggesting the first possibilities of form and structure. Composers began gradually to see that the equalisation of the scales afforded the material for a more perfect and coherent system of design: modulation became a reality, and with it the recognition of different tonics in successive paragraphs or cantos of the composition. They therefore took the simplest effects of contrast, as presented by the dances and Volkslieder of the people, and proceeded to develop them into a fuller diversity of organisation. At first, no doubt, they went on something of a wrong tack: the structural problem received a divided attention, for polyphony was still regarded as paramount, but yet in the chamber music of Corelli and Vivaldi, and in the harpsichord pieces of Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau may be traced a continuous effort not only to make the form distinct, but to make it in some degree progressive. And on the death of Bach, when polyphony had reached a point from which it seemed impossible to advance, music turned almost entirely to questions of structure, and for the next two generations set itself deliberately to perfect the outline of the sonata, the quartett, and the symphony. This helps to explain the fact, otherwise inexplicable, that Bach's influence on the latter half of the eighteenth century was practically non-existent. Partly, of course, we may account for it by remembering that musical art passed, for a time, into another country, but it is a

still stronger reason that composition was occupied with another set of problems. The organisation of harmony is that of simultaneous strains ; the organisation of key is that of successive passages ; and it is obvious that the perfection of the one will afford but little assistance to the development of the other. And so the line of structural evolution passed through Haydn and Mozart, until, in the work of Beethoven, it also attained a temporary climax and culmination. With him, then, the treatment of the musical medium may be held to have reached its fourth principal landmark.

After Beethoven came the Romantic School, the historical importance of which can roughly be epitomised under two heads. First, it widened the range of emotional expression, and so affected music from the standpoint of the idea. Secondly, it returned to Bach, and adapted his polyphonic system to the requirements of the new musical language. But as its artistic strength was its reverence for Bach, so its artistic weakness was its neglect of Beethoven. On the polyphonic side it maintained the old traditions, and even, in some respects, advanced upon them, since the more 'romantic' the idea to be expressed, the more difficult is pure polyphony in its expression. But, on the structural side, it was distinctly retrograde, and either confined itself to the smaller and more rudimentary forms, or, when it attempted those of a larger scope, treated them with something of negligence and preoccupation. Berlioz no doubt took Beethoven for his master, but it was as a poet, not as a musician. And the other great masters of the school, for all their genius and their earnestness and their love of beauty, are yet, in

questions of form, but the minor Socratics of our nineteenth century music, carrying on, each from his own standpoint, some one part of the previous tradition, but neither interpreting nor advancing its full and entire content.

A special word may be said on the relation of Wagner to this general course of musical development. As a dramatist, he stands in some degree aloof: his art is a different art, his methods are different methods, his ancestry may be traced to Shakespear and Æschylus as readily as to Bach and Palestrina. The explanation of his work is always the dramatic explanation: his structure is determined not by principles of pure music, but by the exigencies of the scene. Hence, apart from such a secondary point as orchestration, it is only in his splendid, reckless, audacious polyphony that he has really enlarged the treatment of musical technique. His most enthusiastic followers claim for him that he has 'killed the symphony,' a statement which, though it is radically untrue, is enough to dissociate him from an art that recognises the symphony as its crowning achievement. The drama of the future will accept him as one of its greatest potentates: the music of the future will see in him the lord of a single province, whose government has in one respect assisted the consolidation of the others.

What, then, is required to sum up the tendencies of the present age, and to bring Music to the fifth landmark in its history. Surely a composer, who, while he maintains and develops the harmonic traditions of the Romantic School, shall even more devote himself to the restoration and evolution of musical structure: who shall take up the classical

form where Beethoven left it ; who shall aid to free it from the conventions which that greatest of all masters did not wholly succeed in loosening ; who shall carry it to a further stage and raise it to a fuller organisation. And such a composer has appeared. So far as concerns the technical problem of composition—and it must be remembered that this is at present the only topic under discussion—the work of Brahms is the actual crown and climax of our present Musical art. He is in exact and literal truth ‘*der der kommen musste:*’ the man for whom Music has been waiting. In him converge all previous streams of tendency, not as into a pool, stagnant, passive, and motionless, but as into a noble river that receives its tributary waters and bears them onward in larger and statelier volume.

Tintoret claimed ‘the drawing of Michael Angelo and the colouring of Titian’: Brahms, in like manner, may claim the counterpoint of Bach and the structure of Beethoven. And not only has he entered into the inheritance of these two composers ; he has put their legacies to interest, and has enriched the world with an augmentation of their wealth. He is no mere Alexandrine, no grammarian poet, content to accumulate with a patient and laborious industry the gifts that have been lavished by a previous age ; the artistic heritage is not won by right of labour, and its dynasty only falls to these who are born in the purple. Erudition, in short, may copy the work of Genius ; but Genius alone can develop it.

Are we to say, then, that Brahms is a more consummate master of his medium than Bach or Beethoven ? By no means ; but, in consequence of

their work, his medium is more plastic than theirs. For certain historical reasons, with which the question of personal capacity has nothing to do, the key-system of Bach is rudimentary beside that of Beethoven, and the polyphony of Beethoven less perfect, perhaps, than that of Bach. To Brahms we may apply Dryden's famous epigram, in which the force of Nature 'to make a third has joined the other two.' By his education he learned to assimilate their separate methods; by his position, in the later days of Romance, he found a new emotional language in established use; by his own genius he has made the forms wider and more flexible, and has shown once more that they are not artificial devices, but the organic embodiment of artistic life.

It follows, then, to maintain this statement with a few words of commentary and illustration. And, first, we may take the polyphonic problem, not only because it has some chronological priority, but because the system which it implies is more limited and more readily exhaustible. Now the essential value of Bach's work in this respect is that, in addition to 'writing free and characteristic parts for the several voices in combination,' he 'made the harmonies, which were the sum of the combined counterpoints, move so as to illustrate the principles of harmonic form, and thus give to the hearer the sense of orderliness and design, as well as the sense of contrapuntal complexity,'¹ and since there are no other aims to which polyphonic writing can be directed, it would seem as though Bach's achievement were final, as though it left nothing for future generations to add. But a somewhat closer reflection

¹ Dr Parry, *Art of Music*, pp. 173-4.

will show that there are at least two points in which a possibility of progress may be admitted.

One is the immense growth of Instrumental Music, which has virtually brought with it a new material for treatment. Bach's part-writing is generally vocal in basis, the work of an organist who feels the presence of his choir and his congregation; even his concerti are not far removed from the canzonas which were specified as 'buone da cantare e suonare.' But after him came a generation of composers who recognised and brought into fuller use the peculiar character and flexibility of the strings, and thus opened out a new region, which it has been one of the privileges of Brahms to explore. Thus while, in his organ compositions, in his motetts, in the choruses of the Requiem, Brahms has closely followed the methods of Bach (though even here he solves one or two problems which were left untouched by the earlier master), in such examples as the two string Sestetts and the Symphony in E minor, he adapts those methods to a material which he had inherited from a later ancestry. And here it may be noticed that his simplest accompaniments are always characteristic. Even the arpeggio figure, which is usually the easiest and most careless of all harmonic devices acquires in him a special significance and import.

The other point is the change in emotional and melodic phrascology, due partly to the influence of Beethoven and Schubert, partly to that of the more distinctively Romantic composers. It is quite certain that the characteristic melody of the eighteenth century is, on the whole, more susceptible of polyphonic treatment than that of our own time. The finale of

the Jupiter Symphony is, in any case, a stupendous effort of genius ; but take five typical tunes of Liszt or Berlioz, and Mozart himself could not have dealt with them as he dealt with his own phrases. The curve of melody has altered in some degree, and thus, while it has given new effects of beauty, it has become a little less adaptable to certain of its requirements. No doubt Schumann developed a wonderful polyphonic system of his own ; but even in him we may recognise certain limits : and, moreover, he stands, in this respect, almost alone as an intermediary between Bach and Brahms. We are driven, then, to conclude either that polyphony should grow obsolete, which the most unthinking audacity can hardly affirm, or that the extreme of Romantic expression has lost in art what it has gained in poetry. And herein Brahms appears as a true reformer. His thought is in full accord with the general poetic conception of our age, but he has selected from its entire range those particular forms of phrase and melody which are most conspicuously plastic and malleable. The opening of the A major Quartett is romantic enough, but it admits of that marvellous piece of contrapuntal imitation which surprises us in the coda. The Symphony in F major is one of the least formal of compositions, but the most laborious academician in music could not compile a more elaborate polyphony than Brahms has here created. Indeed, there is little necessity to search for instances : they may be found on almost every page of the concerted or choral works. And, though it be true that Bach is often curiously modern in idea, though he frequently stands nearer to us than Handel or Haydn or Mozart, the fact still remains, that Brahms is in closer and more

intimate sympathy with him than even the romantic composers who made him their ostensible pattern and prototype.

So far, then, as relates to the harmonic aspect, Brahms may be regarded as a real stage in the evolution of Musical Art. There remains the more important question of his contributions to the development of structure: in other words, of his relation to Beethoven. The harmonic ideal had been maintained, in varying degree, by all composers of the first rank, and herein the traditions of Schumann and Chopin were of distinct and momentous service to their successor; but the structural ideal had, since 1830, been allowed to fall into comparative neglect, and in restoring it Brahms had virtually to do his work single-handed. No doubt, in short lyric forms, and even in their direct expansion to a larger scale, the Romantic musicians had shown a considerable mastery of outline; but in the more complex organism of symphony and concerto, they had fallen somewhat out of the line of progress, and had diverged from the methods of the 'Emperor' and the 'A major.' Hence the estimate of Brahms' position in this matter is of double interest: partly because of the intrinsic value of key-structure in musical organisation, partly because the line of development was in some degree broken and obliterated.

Now it has been already maintained that the sonata form, in its widest and most comprehensive signification, represents the highest type of structure to which the Art of Music has yet advanced. Other instrumental forms—the romance, the fantasia, the nocturne—are modelled, with more or less of exactitude, upon sonata movements; and the same is true

even of vocal forms, except in so far as they are influenced by the fugue or affected by the extra-musical requirements of the words. It is therefore to works ostensibly in sonata form that we must primarily address ourselves. And here it may at once be stated that in a vast majority of the details, Beethoven seems to have reached

The outside verge that rounds our faculty.

In the construction of the separate movements, taken as individual unities, there has been little or no progress since his time, for little or no progress was possible. We can only say, then, that in this respect the work of Brahms is as organic as that of his master; and, in saying this, we are merely propounding a matter of comparative analysis which can readily be settled by an appeal to facts. It is as true of Brahms as of Beethoven, that there is in him no redundant phrase, no digression, no parenthesis, nothing that does not bear some intimate relation either to its immediate context, or, with more subtlety, to a remoter part of the subsequent issue. Take, for instance, the rondo tune which opens the Finale of the B flat Sestett. A careless observer may regard the beginning of its second stanza as mere padding, devised to fill a gap until the principal strain recurs. Turn a few pages, and we find that it was the presage of a complete and important episode which itself is vital to the structure as a whole. Again, in the first movement of the same work, if any reader will compare the entry of the second subject with the corresponding place in Beethoven's Hammerclavier Sonata, he will see with what accuracy Brahms learned his lesson and with what consummate skill he applied it,

And in all other qualities of organic structure—in choice of tonal centres, in the relative length of constituent sections, in perfect balance of exposition and development—the same line of legitimate succession may be traced. It is not a question of imitation. Brahms is no copyist, reproducing with careful fidelity the precise outline of a master's original. In this, as in his polyphony, he has assimilated the principles of a past method and has turned them to his own account.

But for the complete organisation of a symphony, or a sonata, it is not sufficient that each movement should be structurally exact; they must be so inter-related as to produce an effect of organism in the whole. And there are three chief ways in which this inter-relation can be secured. The first is by unity of emotional effect; by making the whole work tell the same story, and represent the same general type of feeling. In Beethoven's *Appassionata*, for instance, a scherzo would be an impertinence, in his Eighth Symphony a slow movement would be an intrusion; for the one is as wholly tragic in character as the other is light and humorous. The second is by the proper choice of key for each of the successive numbers; for the selection, that is, among all possible alternatives, of the tonic note that will give the most complete and satisfying result. And herein we may confess that we have one of the few cases in which Beethoven's work was injuriously affected by convention. Of course, the Seventh Symphony stands almost unique and unapproachable, a culminating point of structural excellence, but, as a rule, his scheme, though less homogeneous than that of Mozart, has too little diversity to be accepted as

final. Thirdly, the entire composition may be held together by a transference of themes, that is, by the reminiscence in one number of phrases or melodies that have already been employed in another. Of this device there is hardly any example in Beethoven until the end of his career, and even then the only conspicuous instance is the finale of the Choral Symphony. It is, indeed, the latest-born of all the forces that tend to organisation, and along its lines the sonata form of the future will probably find the readiest opportunity of progress.

If, then, Brahms is the inheritor of Beethoven's method, we may expect to find a continuity of tradition in his treatment of these three points respectively. And assuredly the analysis of his work will not disappoint us. For, in the first place, the poetic unity of his compositions is beyond dispute. In each of the great concerted pieces, whether for the chamber or the orchestra, we find one general type of feeling worked out, it may be, to successive issues, but developed in orderly sequence from a single source. His cast of mind is usually grave and reflective, therefore he has for the most part discarded the scherzo, and replaced it by a movement of more earnest and serious character. His manner of thought is logical and coherent, therefore his finales, like those of Beethoven, are not mere light-hearted fantasias, intended to send away the audience in a good temper, but true conclusions, carefully planned and adequately presented. Even in such works as the Horn Trio, where the contrast is probably at its strongest, there is no real obscurity in the underlying relation; while in the four symphonies, to take the opposite extreme, we need

only hear the sequence of movements to pronounce it inevitable.

And as we find an organic unity in the emotional aspect, so we find an organic diversity in the choice of keys. Except for the obvious principle, that first and last movements must acknowledge the same tonic, Brahms admits none of the *a priori* laws by which his predecessor was occasionally bound. In other words, he takes as his unit not the separate movement but the entire series, and selects his keys for Adagio and Intermezzo with the same structural care as he uses for a 'second subject,' or a 'development section.' Allusion has already been made to the Violoncello Sonata in F, one of the most marvellous pieces of successful audacity in all musical form; but hardly less remarkable is the Symphony in E minor, where the key of the slow movement is equally unusual, and equally necessary. Indeed, any of the concerted works will serve for illustration. The choice is sometimes simple, sometimes recondite, but in all cases it is justified by the event.

Transference of themes is a device attended by one imminent danger. If awkwardly employed, it may look like poverty of thought, or at best that artless *naïveté* of repetition which is only tolerable in a ballad literature. But if this danger be avoided, and its avoidance is only a question of skill, the reminiscence of a previous melody may round off and complete an entire work in much the same way as the 'Recapitulation' rounds off and completes a single movement. It has been already said that Beethoven makes little use of this method. Schumann indicated some of its possibilities, but Schumann died

while the work was still incomplete, and left its further elaboration to other hands. And though Brahms is somewhat tentative and uncertain in the matter, though he leaves room for future advance and future progress, yet at least we may say that he has explored more of the new ground than any of his predecessors. In the Finale of the G major Violin Sonata, and in that of the Quartett in B flat, he is satisfied to carry out the suggestion of Schumann;¹ but elsewhere, as in the second Symphony and the clarinet Quintett, he develops them in a new direction, by founding two movements on thematic variants of the same idea. It is difficult to overrate the value of these hints for future guidance, though, as yet, they are only hints, not complete solutions. For, grant that an entire sonata or symphony can never be called organic in precisely the same sense as its constituent parts; grant that their analogue is the man, and its analogue the corporate community; still some further organisation of the whole is undoubtedly possible, and we may well expect it to follow the method which Brahms has here indicated.

In one word, he has completed, for present purposes, the emancipation of musical form, not by the false freedom of anarchy, but by the true freedom of a rational code. Artistic progress, like that of the political commonwealth, has always tended towards the abolition of purely conventional laws, and to the maintenance and development of those that are founded upon broad principles of human nature. By Brahms, so far as we can see, the last links of convention have been snapped, and the form has

¹ Compare the corresponding movements in Schumann's D minor Violin Sonata and Pianoforte Quintett.

now room to grow and expand in perfect liberty. Look, for instance, at his treatment of the Concerto, which, up to his time, was the most unsatisfactory, because the most conventional, of all classical types. He has broken down the unnecessary rule of the three movements, he has finally overthrown the tyranny of the solo instrument, he has given the whole form a free constitution similar to that of the Quartett and the Symphony. And though we be disinclined to regard our present sonata-form as ultimate; though it may some day develop into a new type, as it was itself developed from the Partita, yet the very possibility of future advance depends upon conditions which it has been the work of Brahms to secure. Hence, to call him a reactionary, as some writers are fond of doing, is simply to misunderstand his whole relation to musical art. In all history, there is no composer more essentially progressive.

But, it may be objected, is not all this insistence on minutiae somewhat pedantic and artificial? Does it really matter whether a concerto has four movements or three? whether an adagio is in A flat or A natural? Indeed, is not the whole sonata-form a piece of academic subtlety, and *a fortiori*, must we not regard its details as points of grammar rather than points of art? And the critic, whom we are only too probably supposing, will go on to speak of 'melody beaten out into thematic gold-leaf,' or will even tell us that there is more music in an intermezzo, where the composer's thought 'runs freely without restrictions of form,' than in all the studious ingenuity of codas and development sections. In short we are asked to believe that beauty

is too spiritual for legislation, and that any attempt to render it amenable to a code is as futile as the countryman's endeavour to break Pegasus into harness.

Now, in the first place, to commend a musician for disregarding the laws of form is even more unreasonable than to commend a poet for his halting verses, or a painter for his bad drawing. If by laws are meant conventions, then the criticism is just in itself, but it does not touch the point at issue; if natural laws are meant, then the critic has done no more than express his own personal preference for chaos. The little pianoforte pieces of Brahms, for example, are charming, not because they are formless, but because their form is perfect. The only difference between them and the sonata movements, from which they are derived, is a difference of development: the underlying principles are identical. In the second place, it has already been maintained that the sonata is not an artificial construction, but an organic growth evolved, in steadily-increasing complexity, from a living origin: and, further, that its constituent parts represent between them all the general types of all existing instrumental compositions. Either, then, this conclusion must be refuted, or the 'academic' view of the sonata must be abandoned as untenable. And in the third place, if it be demurred that although some general laws of form are advisable, yet the artist should treat them with a free hand, and not expend himself on niggling details, then it is an obvious answer, that this objection rests on a confusion of thought. The little masters have sometimes to choose between a superficial facility and an elaboration that smells of the lamp: the great masters have so as-

simulated their principles, that exactitude with them is a second nature. In Tintoret's *Miracle of S. Mark*, the twisted rope strands could not have been drawn more perfectly if they had cost weeks of calculation and measurement: yet each is finished with a single sweep of the brush. And so again in Brahms this accuracy of detail is not a matter of diligence, but a matter of insight, cultivated, no doubt, by past training, but employed at the moment with a direct and unerring certainty. It may legitimately be questioned whether perfection of form is not sometimes too dearly bought by a sacrifice of vigour or originality: if the two can be set in antithesis, we may understand that a critical judgment should hesitate between them. But, given vigour and originality, and, in Brahms, no serious writer has ever denied these gifts, it hardly admits of discussion that the form of a work is, in some degree, a measure of its artistic value.

We may conclude, then, that in what has been called the treatment of the musical medium, Brahms occupies an incontestable position among the greatest composers of the world. It now follows that we should consider the character of his ideas, the nature of his melody, and, in a word, the particular qualities implied in his power of invention and his emotional standpoint. It is, perhaps, inevitable that we should do this with something of a prepossession. For, as we have already seen, in music, form and thought are obverse and reverse of the same set of relations, and the organism of the one is our best guarantee for the vitality of the other. Here, at any rate, academic methods are always imitations, copies which in no way advance upon their pre-existing model: and

thus, if the artistic structure of a work be really living and progressive, we need have little fear about its artistic function. But, at the same time, music can adumbrate so many different types of emotion, that it is worth inquiring whether a given artist has seized them all, and whether, if he be limited to a part of the field, his value is affected or impaired by the limitation.

Now it is sometimes maintained that the music of Brahms is deficient in emotional sensibility: that it is too sober, too self-controlled, too intellectual to be really artistic. The composer, like the poet, should be animated by a 'divine madness and enthusiasm;' he should leave to philosophy the more cautious attributes of deliberate thought; he has the free wind of heaven in his sails, and should run before it on a full tide, neither anxious for his safety nor careful of his direction. But of two things, one: Either we are to hold that art gains by hysteria and extravagance, and that its highest climax is a delirium of unrestrained and riotous passion; or, if this be impossible, we must accept the only alternative, and admit self-control as a necessary principle. The only true question at issue, then, must be the measure in which the restraining influence is to be exercised—the point at which it sets up its barrier and says, 'Thus far and no farther.' And if we recall the Titanic strength of Brahms' first Symphony, or the romance of the *Tragic Overture*, and the vigour and variety of such 'Dramatic Lyrics' as *Verrath*, or *Entführung*, or *Meine Liebe ist Grün*, we shall hardly assert that their limit has here been suggested by any timidity or any lack of emotional force. In short, when confronted with the facts, the whole attack dwindles

into a statement that Brahms' passion is sane and manly—a conclusion which we are not in any way concerned to deny.

But at least, it may be urged, the range of feeling is circumscribed: there is little humour, little gaiety, little expression of the brighter and more genial aspects of life. Granted, with a few notable exceptions, but the same may be said of Æschylus and Dante, of Milton and Wordsworth. It is merely a relic of primitive barbarism that makes us look upon music as an adjunct to conviviality, as an appanage to the 'banquet of wine,' as a pleasant emotional stimulus designed for the amusement of an idle hour. Music is an art of at least the same dignity as poetry or painting, it admits of similar distinctions, it appeals to similar faculties, and in it, also, the highest field is that occupied with the most serious issues. Not that we have any need to undervalue the charm of its more playful moments: we may enjoy Offenbach in precisely the same way as we enjoy Labiche; but it is no very extreme paradox to say that *Tristan* is a greater work than *Orphée aux Enfers*, and that *La Cagnotte* is on a different literary plane from *Lear* and *Hamlet*. And in like manner, if we are disposed to find fault with Brahms because the greater part of his work is grave and earnest, let us at least endeavour to realise how such a criticism would sound if it were directed against the *Divina Commedia*, or the *Agamemnon*, or *Paradise Lost*.

Indeed, it is incredible that anyone should listen to Brahms' melody and not be convinced. Do we want breadth? There is the *Sestett* in B flat, the *Second Symphony*, the *Piano Quartett* in A. Do we want tenderness? There is the *Minnelied*, there

is 'Wie bist du meine Königin,' there is the first Violin Sonata. Is it simplicity? We may turn to Erinnerung, to Sonntag, to the later pianoforte pieces. Is it complexity? We have the Symphony in E minor, the four Concertos, the great masterpieces of vocal counterpoint. For pure, sensuous beauty, apart from all other attributes, it is impossible to surpass the Schicksalslied, or the F major Symphony, or the Clarinet Quintett. Indeed, the difficulty in Brahms is to find a poor tune or a clumsy passage. No doubt, in work of such wide scope and extent, there will always be parts that do not appeal to a given hearer, that represent a mood with which he is out of sympathy, or contain some form of expression that fails to interest him; but, at the very lowest, we may say that the mood of Brahms is never ignoble, and its expression very seldom inadequate. Even the unlucky and much-abused theme in the third movement of the Clarinet Trio has certain qualities of style which redeem it from triviality; and in any case it remains almost a solitary exception—one cankered bud in a whole garden of delight.

Here a word may be said on Brahms' indebtedness to the actual melody of previous musicians. It is indisputable that in his work we sometimes find phrases, and very rarely complete strains, which recall Beethoven, or Schubert, or Schumann. But, in the first place, there is seldom or never any case of direct quotation, the outline of an idea is borrowed and filled with a new content; and in the second place, a charge of plagiarism is only serious if it implies poverty of invention. That one man may steal a horse while another may not look over the

hedge, is, if considered aright, the highest embodiment of abstract justice: the thief may be your personal friend, in whose honesty of intention you have every reason to confide, the face at the field-edge may wear a hang-dog look which fills you with not unnatural apprehension. And seriously, it is idle to suppose that Brahms adopted these passages—half-a-score, perhaps, in a list of a hundred and twenty elaborate compositions—because he felt that his own supply was running short, and that it must needs be supplemented by a raid over the border. Plagiarism means either the appropriation of an entire work, or the embellishment of a poor texture with some patch of purple that does not belong to the artist. It has nothing whatever to do with these casual and unimportant reminiscences.

There are one or two matters of detail in Brahms' melody which it may be worth while to notice. In the first place, it is conspicuously diatonic, founded for the most part on the ordinary notes of the simplest scale, and so indued with a robustness and a virility which is wanting to the progression by semitones. Besides, he is thus enabled to keep his chromatic effects in reserve, either for purposes of remote modulation, as in the *Æolsharfe*, or for marking an emotional crisis, as in the slow movement of the Horn Trio, or the close of the stanza in *Feldeinsamkeit*. Against this, no doubt, may be set his use of the flattened sixth, which is so frequent as to be almost a mannerism, but it will be observed that this appears more often in the harmonisation of the melody than in its actual statement. It is a point of colour, not a point of drawing.

Again, there are two general types of melodic

curve ; one which rises and falls by a progression of consecutive notes, one which follows the constituent parts of a chord in arpeggio. As a rule, the great melodies of the world contain elements of both, with a characteristic preponderance of the former ; and attempts to construct tunes out of the latter alone, as, for instance, the opening theme of Weber's Second Pianoforte Sonata, have usually ended in disappointment. But to this rule Brahms is an exception. In a large number of his themes the arpeggio predominates, and always with a special interest and a special personality. Thus, in *Von ewiger Liebe*, in the *Sapphic Ode*, in the Violoncello tune, from the first movement of the B flat, *Sestet* we have melodies designed after this pattern which are not only clear and salient, but strikingly beautiful as well. It will be seen that in all three cases the same device is employed, a passage from dominant to mediant, which leaves the intervening tonic untouched, and in this small matter is indicated the real secret of their effectiveness. Brahms does not merely take the harmonic notes as they are presented by the simple arpeggio, he makes selection among them, omitting one and emphasising another, until he has given character to the whole progression. It is hardly extravagant to say that there is as much difference between a chord-tune of Brahms and a chord-tune of Weber as between a well-written accompaniment figure and an Alberti bass.

A third feature is the remarkable variety and ingenuity of his metrical system. The device of cross-rhythm acquires with him an entirely new significance ; it does not defy the restrictions of the

bar, but totally disregards them. In the first movement of the Violin Concerto, for instance, the measure of three crotchets is traversed by a phrase of five thrice repeated, the effect of which is a momentary obliteration of the time signature, and the substitution not of a similar rhythm in slower tempo, but of an interpolated phrase, which seems to stand wholly out of relation to the beat: and yet the passage does not project from the general plane of the movement, as do the famous syncopated chords in the *Eroica*, it is woven into the texture, and forms a homogeneous part of the substance. Again Brahms is fond of placing his melody so that the stress falls outside the principal accent of the bar, thus baffling the hearer who feels that rhythm and tempo are really the same, but is yet conscious that for the moment they do not coincide. It would be an interesting experiment for any musician, who has never seen the Quartett in G minor, to write down from dictation the first Pianoforte phrase of the intermezzo; and an instance even more striking may be found in the first movement of the Clarinet Quintett, where the string melody seems to be shifted forward a quaver in advance of the beat, until the solo instrument sets the passage back in its place, and the discrepancy is resolved. Here, then, is another reason why the music of Brahms is difficult at a first hearing. 'Was ist das überhaupt für ein Takt?' said the Viennese critics, after vainly endeavouring to count their way through a complicated passage, and the inexperienced beginner will often feel tempted to sympathise with their impatience. But, as we gradually learn how to thread the intricacies of the phrase, and how to balance the alternatives that proffer

their incompatible claims, we gain a more lasting pleasure from the intellectual stimulus than can ever be afforded by glowing harmony or by opulence of tone. And if it be objected that this is little better than a musical enigma, a mere piece of child's play below the dignity of a serious art, then the answer is, that dramatic irony must fall under the same condemnation, for it aims at precisely the same effect. To confuse the noble with the trivial employment of artistic illusion, is to see no difference between a play of Sophocles and a puppet show.

Lastly, we may notice the rightness and finality which mark the most characteristic of his phrases. In Shakespear it often happens that we come across a line where there is nothing unusual in the thought, nothing recondite in the language, nothing but the simplest idea exhibited in the simplest words, and yet when we read it we feel at once that it could have been said in no other way, and that it can never be said again. And, in his own art, Brahms too has this gift of making simplicity memorable. For instance, in the opening theme of the F minor Quintett, there is nothing that can be called a device; the short loop, by which the second melodic curve picks up the first, is common enough in music; so is the use of the two alternative leading notes, so is the repetition of the same emphatic sound on the chief accent of three successive figures. But no one who has once heard the phrase can ever forget it: and no one can imagine its being altered by a single note without serious loss and detriment. In a word, it is inevitable, and therefore final: a plain statement of a primary truth which remains with us as a delight

when the most elaborate epigrams have passed away into weariness or oblivion. And in two of the Violin Sonatas, in the A minor Quartett, in a hundred other works and movements, we shall find that the first sentences give an equally striking illustration of this power. Many composers become commonplace when they try to be simple : they can only seize our attention with an effort, with some special trick of colour or contrast. Brahms, who has at his command every shade in the whole gamut of colour, can make an abiding masterpiece with a few strokes in black and white.

In the foregoing analysis, nothing has been attempted except a bare description of the organism. The mystery of life, the breath of thought and inspiration, the secret language by which mind speaks to mind,—all these are beyond our reach, and in dealing with them we should only confess our ignorance of our own inadequacy. But this at least we may say, that wherever the divine principle is present, it makes itself known by the witness of visible signs—by law, by progress, by inter-relation of parts and unity of function. If, then, we can read the signs, we may guess at the thing signified : if the words be clear and consecutive, we may claim that there is a meaning in the sentence. In music it is possible, as the old Psychologists fabled, that the soul is the true realisation of the body, the power that moulds and shapes the organs into their fulness of existence and energy. And thus, though we can never put into words what we mean by the soul of music, we may yet point to perfection of body as its evidence. No man will deny that the art of Brahms is a living force

—a genuine, spontaneous outcome of personal feeling and personal vitality. And, if it be so, the analysis of its external form may, to some extent, indicate its possession of the more spiritual gifts.

That he stands beside Bach and Beethoven is hardly any more a matter for controversy. All three are poets of the same order—noble, dignified, majestic—followers of the statelier muses, and of Apollo, who teaches to men the truths of prophecy. All three are consummate artists, in whose supreme mastery of utterance the highest message has found fit and adequate expression; and finally, in all three alike may be seen the culmination and fulfilment of an epoch in musical history—a climax of achievement which not only closes the chapter of its own age but renders possible the further record of the ages, to come. True, the work of Brahms is still too near us to receive its proper meed of appreciation. We are not yet so familiar with his method as with that of his two forerunners: in his speech there is still something new and strange which now and again baffles our understanding. But all true art is unfathomable: we see the play of colour upon its surface, and know from the very richness and glory of the sight, that below are depths which no plummet can measure. By our century of experience we have learned to know a little of Beethoven: we shall no more master his secret than we shall enter into the mind of Shakespear or Goethe. And in like manner, if we call Brahms obscure, we are imputing our own weakness as the fault of a man who is too great for us. It is not for nothing that we love best those of his writings which we have most carefully studied. It is not for nothing that every decade adds to the

number of those who see in him the highest expression of our present ideal. When music attains to fuller knowledge and nobler practice, it will grant him a due place among its foremost leaders, and to us who honour him as a monarch, will succeed a generation which reverences him as a hero.

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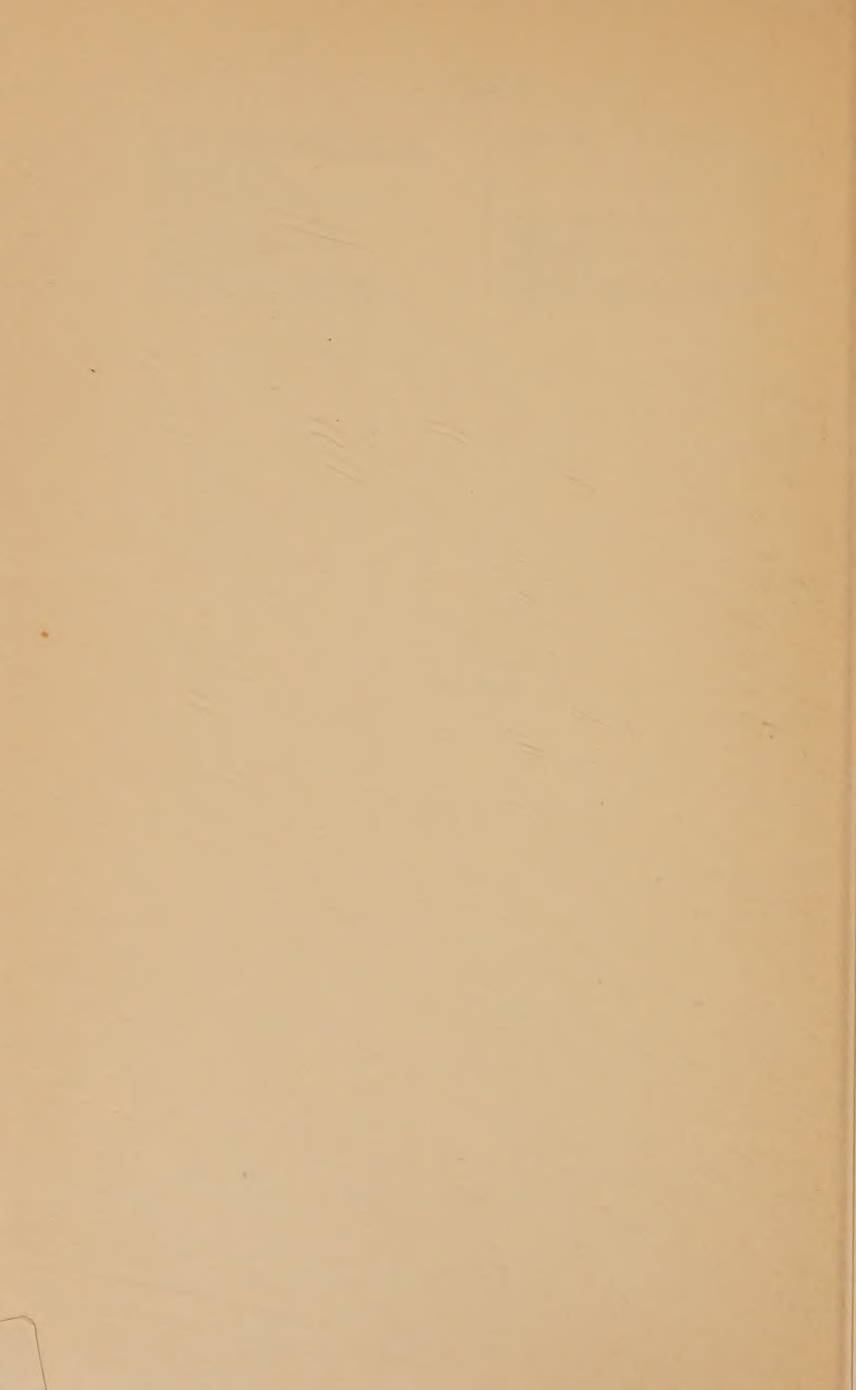
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